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THE ABBESS,

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF THE "DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS," &c.

J'ai vu l'impie adoré sur la terre ;
Pareil au cedre il cachait dans les cieux
Son front audacieux ;
Il semblait à son gré gouverner le tonnerre,
Foulait aux pieds ses ennemis vaincus :
Je n'ai fait que passer—il n'était déjà plus.

RACINE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND CO.

AVE MARIA LANE.

1833.



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THE ABBESS.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Why should I write this down, that's riveted, screwed to my memory.

SHAKSPEARE.

JULIET's first care was to provide needful refreshment for her infirm companion, and equally to her surprise and satisfaction, she saw him restored, both in mind and body, to a much greater degree of strength and efficient firmness, than she had ventured to hope for. She then sought her father, and found him with Father Laurence, in a state of violent irritation at her absence, and childishly bemoaning the ill fortune which, by this "adventure of the Abbess," threatened

to delay his promised happiness with the beautiful and noble lady Claudia de Montecielo.

Such a phrase as this, three hours before, would have driven Juliet past her patience; but now she was armed with hope, so strong and so well defined to her own mind, though unintelligible, perhaps, to every other, that it was much beyond the power of any thing the Count d'Albano could say, or do, to vex or shake her.

In answer to his passionate—"Where have you been, lady Juliet? Where have you been?" three times repeated in a breath, she quietly replied,—

"To the Santa Croce, sir; no one has known my aunt so long as old Garroni—and I have brought him here, that he may accompany Father Laurence forthwith to Rome, according to the instructions conveyed to us by the dismal letter of this morning."

"You are prompt, young lady—and not too well advised to act thus, without my orders; I know not that I shall suffer my Confessor to leave me."

“You have, sir,” replied his daughter, “so much at the present moment to occupy your mind, that I was unwilling to oppress you further by needless consultations.”

This most judicious allusion at once tranquillized the irritation of the Count, and Juliet had no more difficulty in arranging the departure of Father Laurence for the morrow. Having satisfied her father, she returned to the room where she had left Garroni, and found him on his knees before a small cross of wood, which he had placed amongst the frame-work of the chimney.

He did not turn his head at her entrance, and she waited in perfect stillness till he had finished his devotions. He then rose from his knees with an air of almost cheerful composure, and seating himself at the table, made a sign to her to place herself near him.

“This is no moment for ceremony, my child,” said he, “or Francesco Garroni would not seat himself in the presence of an Albano.”

“Speak not of such idle distinctions, Garroni,”

she replied ; “you are about to do that, for the whole race of Albano, that shall make them your debtors for ever.”

“I know I am,” answered the old man, “I know it—and it is this which gives me strength to find myself within these fatal walls—and live. I am near eighty years old, Juliet d’Albano, but should the struggle last till I am a hundred, I shall not die, till the work to which I am called is done. Be content, dear child; be easy in spirit, be happy in mind. Geraldine d’Albano shall come forth like gold from the furnace, and Isidore——”

“And Isidore?” repeated Juliet anxiously.

“Ask me not,” said Garroni, “taking her hand, and repeating with solemn earnestness,—“Ask me not, sweet child—I fain would tell you all—all the long frightful history; but if I do, my strength will fail—I can but tell it once—and that must not be here.”

Juliet at once felt the good sense of this forbearance; and, ardently as she longed to know all that she now darkly guessed at, she com-

mended his prudence, and assured him that she felt too fully convinced both of his will and power to serve her aunt, to be over-anxious as to the means that were in his hands to accomplish it. Garroni blessed her fervently, and as he looked in her face, which no longer indicated the extreme wretchedness she had felt at Santa Croce, he said :—

“I can bear to see you now—God has received me to his mercy; you shall have masses said for me—and in Heaven I shall look upon her sweet face in glory.”

Juliet feared to let him dwell too much upon the past. It was evident that he had suffered greatly, and that there were moments when the recollection of it shook his reason; but wild as his words occasionally were, there was not one of them that did not tend to confirm her belief in the extreme importance of his testimony. It was as much to turn him from that harrowing past, as to give him needful information, that she now entered with him upon the present ground of accusation against the Abbess; she

related the escape of Camilla, and showed him that it would be easy to bring forward sufficient evidence to prove that the Abbess was in no degree concerned in it.

“ It was I, Francesco,” she continued, “ who plotted, arranged, and executed the whole ; and, if need be, I am ready to suffer for it. Remember this, Francesco.”

He listened to her, without interrupting her by word or sign, till she had finished, and then he said—

“ I see it all ; lay down your innocent head this night in peace, my child ; I will save her without your aid ; not a second time will I see that sweet face ——.”

He stopped, and passed his hand across his eyes, as if to remove some object that distressed him.

At this moment the voice of Morgante was heard in the court, inquiring if any could tell where the lady Juliet was.

“ That is my page, good brother ; I must speak with him. Shall I lead you to the hall—

there is old Marietta there—you must remember her?”

Garroni made an effort to rise, but again appeared trembling and agitated; Juliet seemed to understand his feelings, for she said:—

“ Stay where you are, Francesco; I will send Father Laurence to you, that you may settle together the hour and manner of your departure.”

He gave her a look of thankfulness, and resumed his seat.

“ Do so, do so, my child. Alas! I am very weak, when, even now that the light of Heaven so plainly shines upon my path, I still tremble, as if I yet wandered on in the dark night as heretofore.”

Juliet left him; and having first performed her promise, by sending to desire Father Laurence would go to him, she went to the parlour, and ordered Olive, whom she found there, to order Morgante to attend her.

He came immediately; for having already caught some tidings of the news Father Lau-

rence had received, he had long been seeking for lady Juliet, in an agony of impatience, to hear what it really might be. Juliet had, perhaps, never felt such true affection for her little page, as she did in seeing the passionate burst of grief which followed her announcement of the Abbess's danger. Her confidence in Morgante's truth was unbounded, and she scrupled not to soothe his terror, by telling him how much she hoped from the exertions of old Francesco.

Morgante listened to her, but evidently did not share her confidence; nor could he, without knowing exactly all the vague and shadowy ideas which, in her mind, connected his testimony with events long past, but which must produce the strongest effect upon any accusation laid by Isidore against her aunt. To all this she could give him no clue. The confidence of Geraldine was too sacred to have been breathed to any.

“There is, as I believe, more news coming hither for Father Laurence,” said the boy

dejectedly; "and it may be worse still, for what I know; for Father Dominic ever looks to me as a bird of bad omen."

"Father Dominic? Is he here, Morgante?"

"He is either here, or he will be soon," replied the boy. "I tarried awhile at Torre Vecchia, to see a vessel just arrived from Trieste come to the pier, and the first passenger that stepped on shore, was Father Dominic."

"That proves not that he is coming here, Morgante."

"No, Signora; but I saw him, staff in hand, following half a mile behind me, as I came up the rocky road that leads from the town to our north entrance; that road can only bring him hither, Signora."

Olive entered at the moment he said this, and confirmed his intelligence. "Grim Father Dominic" was just arrived, mightily hot and weary, and had desired to see Father Laurence alone.

"And is Father Laurence now with him, Olive?"

“ Yes, Signora, they are shut up together in our father’s study.”

Juliet, however, saw nothing alarming in this, and with a heart in which hope had now a larger portion than fear, she dismissed Morgante, with a charge to sit with Brother Francesco till Father Laurence came to him, and to be very kind and careful that he wanted for nothing.

She then joined her father in his library. It was, however, far from her intention to communicate to him any portion of her secret hope ; it would have been as rash, as it certainly was unnecessary. The Count, whose mind never seemed capable of containing above one idea at a time, was now much too full of the answer he was expecting from the father of lady Claudia, to permit the entrance of any very painful degree of anxiety respecting his sister. He certainly had never quite forgiven the offence he had received from her ; and though, whenever he pronounced her name, it was with ceremonious respect, he no longer sought, as formerly, to introduce it upon all occasions, or to descant, for

hours together, upon the honour and glory of her near relationship. Feeling, therefore, that her reserve would cause him no pain, Juliet said no more of old Francesco's mission, than that she was sure the venerable man would prove just such an evidence as the nameless friend, from whom the alarming letter came, had wished them to dispatch to Rome.

“It may be so, lady Juliet; and all that is very well; but as for Father Laurence, he must engage to return again with all possible speed. My marriage may be fixed for any day, a week, a fortnight; in short, I know not when, and I must have him here. Doubtless, the prior will be the fitting person to perform the ceremony; but I must have Father Laurence with me; indeed, I must.”

“Fear not, dear sir, but he shall return in time; he will, I am sure, make no unnecessary delay, when such an event is expected; and here I think he comes, for I hear the shuffle of his slippers in the corridor.”

The Confessor entered the moment after,

and the Count instantly began a most earnest entreaty, that let what would happen, he should take care to return in time to attend upon him on the day of his marriage. Juliet was surprised to observe the absent air with which Father Laurence listened to him; it was not only evident that he was thinking of something else, but that the subject, let it be what it might, occupied a greater portion of his whole attention, than it was usual for him to bestow on any meditation whatever. She remembered that Father Dominic had been with him, and concluded, like Morgante, that he had brought him alarming intelligence.

“If the Count does not particularly want you, Father Laurence,” said Juliet; “I wish you would have the kindness to visit old Francesco in the butler’s hall. He is anxious to learn your arrangements about setting off to-morrow. I promised to send you to him long ago; but I believe you have been engaged with your friend, Father Dominic. Has he heard the

strange news from Sant' Catherina's, Father Laurence?"

An air of the most evident embarrassment took possession of the Confessor's features.

"In truth, lady Juliet, I know not ——."

"Nay, that is strange, good Father; I should have thought it would have been the first word to pass between you."

"Far from it—far from it," said Father Laurence, recovering himself; "think you, lady Juliet, that I would speak to any man respecting what must so nearly touch my patron?—but, lady Juliet, if it please you, I have one word for your private ear, before I go to do your bidding with Francesco."

Juliet followed him out of the room, and he led the way to the parlour.

"I have been thinking, lady Juliet," said he, "that if we are fortunate enough to obtain admission to the lady Geraldine d'Albano, the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, I should say,—I have been thinking, that it would truly be a great comfort for her, could she have some female

near her, who was not a stranger to her ; therefore, I would propose, if it meets your liking, that we should take the damsel, Olive, with us to Rome."

Before Juliet replied, she gave a rapid thought as to what the monk's motive could be for this proposal—that it was tender care for the Abbess, she could hardly believe—and yet her imagination could suggest no other.

" You give me a lesson, Father Laurence," she replied ; " my dear aunt will indeed want the comfort of a woman near her—but that woman can be only myself—I will, myself, accompany you to Rome."

Father Laurence coloured as red as scarlet.

" Yourself, lady Juliet ? What will my lord the Count say ?"

" Trouble not yourself for that, good Father ; I have lately given proof to my lord the Count, that I am his best and truest friend—I fear not that he should thwart any wish of mine."

The monk knew that she was right : since

her project of marrying him had been announced, her influence with her father was unbounded.

“Is Father Dominic still here?” said Juliet, abruptly.

“Here? Is he here, my daughter? really I do not justly know——. Have you any commands for him, lady Juliet?”

“It may be that he can serve our cause at Rome; I wish to know if he be still here, holy Father.”

“I will inquire, my daughter,” said Father Laurence, shuffling away, “and bring you notice straight.”

He left her, and Juliet remained in deep meditation; she was puzzled to discover what her reverend Confessor was about:—“but it matters not,” thought she, “I will go with him.”

Father Laurence almost immediately brought her word, that Father Dominic was returned to his convent.

“Returned?” said Juliet, carelessly; “I

thought the holy Father was just arrived from Trieste?"

Again Father Laurence coloured to the very top of his tonsure.

"Now then, good Father," said Juliet, slightly smiling, "you can pay your visit to old Garroni, —I will, meanwhile, announce to the Count my intended journey, and then, in all haste, set about preparing for it."

The Count testified little surprise at her determination, but after a moment's consideration, seemed to fancy that he understood her motives.

"You act wisely, my child—with her influence at Rome, she has little to fear—and as you have decided upon returning to your sacred calling, it is quite right that you should manifest your zeal to serve the Abbess of Sant' Catharina's; of course, you will inhabit some religious house during your stay,—know you of any with whose superior your revered aunt is well acquainted?"

"I do, sir," replied Juliet; "many of the canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre are her

friends of long standing,—it is to them I shall go.”

“That is well;—but, my dear Juliet, do not leave Rome without bringing some elegant testimony of regard for lady Claudia—some trinket—some bridal ornaments—you understand me? Something that I could offer her, with credit to my taste.”

Juliet promised to remember the commission, and to execute it punctually, if circumstances would permit her to do so. She then hastened to her room, to make such preparations as were necessary for her sudden journey, and gave Olive notice that she should require her attendance. This intimation was received with a suppressed smile, and a promise that she would be ready at an early hour on the morrow.

Juliet now prepared to go to rest, of which, in truth, she had great need; but her intention was delayed by the arrival of Morgante, who hastily begged that she would speak one word to Francesco, before she retired for the night.

She immediately complied with the request, and found the old man with marks of great agitation on his countenance.

“ Know you,” said he, the moment she entered, “ who has been here ?”

“ Do you mean Father Dominic, good brother ?”

“ Yes, Father Dominic.—Do you take him into your councils ?”

“ No, indeed, Francesco—I hardly know him by sight.”

“ Then wherefore is he here ?”

“ He is well-known to our Confessor, and often visits him.”

“ I knew not that,” replied Garroni, thoughtfully. “ Is he to go with us ?”

“ Certainly not, he can know nothing of this business ; Father Laurence assures me, that he has not named it to him ; but I shall go with you, Francesco.”

“ It is right—it is very right you should, my child,—and take the boy, your page, with you, he may do us service ;—but hold no close council

with the friend of Dominic—I will not trust him.”

These last words were spoken in a cautious whisper. Juliet made a sign that she understood him, and rose to take her leave; Garroni rose too, and followed her to the door; at the moment she was leaving him, he laid his hand upon her arm, and whispered in her ear—

“For the love of mercy, let me not pass this night alone!”

He seemed to speak with difficulty and reluctance, and his hand trembled: Juliet trembled too:—

“You shall not,” she replied; “compose yourself, Garroni; Morgante shall be with you.”

At an early hour the following morning, lady Juliet, her page, and Olive, were in their litter; and before the sun was fully above the horizon, they had already travelled a league on their journey towards Rome; Father Laurence and Garroni rode on mules beside them, accompanied by several well-armed attendants.

It is probable that some scruple of conscience suggested to the Count, that he was himself taking this important business rather supinely, for he insisted, that lady Juliet and his Confessor should come to his bed-side, before they left the castle, and receive a message for his respected sister.

“Tell her,” said he, with most impressive earnestness, “that nothing should have kept me from waiting upon her at such a time, but the imperative duty of attending to the negociation, on which depends the continuance of the race from which she sprang,—in a word, explain to her fully my present delicate situation, with respect to the lady Claudia di Montecielo.”

Both Juliet and the Confessor promised that his commands should be punctually obeyed; he then, with most amiable fatherly anxiety, desired she would take great care of herself, and not fail to announce to the Cardinal, who had the honour of being her cousin, that she was in Rome.

“But above all, Juliet,” he repeated, in conclusion, “remember lady Claudia.”

Juliet reiterated the promise she had before given, and he then permitted them to depart.

Though the journey was long and tedious, it was performed without accident; and lady Juliet and her cortege found themselves in safety at Rome, within a week of their leaving Albano.

CHAPTER XXXV.

No metal can, no, not the hangman's axe,
Bear half the keenness of thy sharp envy.

SHAKSPEARE.

JULIET repaired immediately to the convent of the Holy Sepulchre, where she was cordially and respectfully received by the noble Countess di Melino, chief canoness of the order. Nothing could exceed the astonishment, with which she herself, and the other ladies of her house, heard that the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's had been arraigned before the holy tribunal. When it was discovered, that lady Juliet herself had been resident at Ancona, during the time that the escape of the immured nun was effected, the

eager curiosity of the canonesses knew no bounds; and it required all the influence of the powerful motives which sustained her discretion, to enable her to answer the interminable string of questions addressed to her, without committing herself. The very short time she had resided in the convent, furnished her strongest defence, through the whole of this embarrassing examination.

“Were the sisterhood generally attached to the unfortunate nun?” was the natural question.

“I really had no means of judging—I took the novice’s habit the very day her situation was discovered,” was the unsatisfactory reply.

“Do you know in what part of the building the vaults were situated, where the interment took place?”

“I was told that they were in the side next the sea.”

“Is it not possible, then,” said a portly canoness, who still felt some sympathy with human affairs; “is it not possible that her lover

may have found means to exhume her from without, and so bear her away by water?"

"It seems very probable," replied Juliet.

"No, no, no—quite impossible," said the Countess di Melino.—"I have visited the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's in her convent, and such a device as you speak of would, ere this, have sent the chapel afloat upon the Adriatic.—Pray, my dear young lady, was the Abbess herself particularly attached to the unfortunate culprit?"

"My aunt, I think, knew very little of her."

It was thus that Juliet's first weary day at Rome passed away.—Father Laurence had promised, when they parted the evening before at the gate of the Holy Sepulchre, to use his utmost endeavours to discover where the Abbess was lodged. He boasted of friends attached to the holy office, and declared himself very confident of being able to ascertain both where she was, and when her trial would come on; but the day passed, and he did not appear; neither had she seen Garroni. The old man had confessed to her,

that the line of conduct he meant to pursue was not without difficulty. He spoke with the most sincere and profound respect of the jurisdiction of the Inquisition; but owned that its very sanctity sometimes made it difficult for a poor man, unconnected with any of the powerful churchmen who belonged to it, to procure attention. Still he was sanguine in hope, and had left her with the assurance of early tidings,—but none came. Morgante, whom the good canoness permitted to be lodged within their convent, tortured his wit to find sources of consolation and hope for his mistress, but all he could do was in vain. Juliet was most completely wretched.

It was matter of more surprise than comfort to her, that Olive gave every indication of being quite as unhappy as herself. She passed the day in tears, and when she attended Juliet on her retiring for the night, declared herself so ill, that she did not expect to be able to leave her bed next day.

Early on the following morning Juliet was

summoned to the parlour of the convent by a stranger, who desired to speak to her—it was Garroni. He appeared to be infinitely more active and alert than she ever remembered to have seen him, and was evidently animated by some feeling that appeared to give him new life. He addressed her abruptly on the business which brought him, hardly allowing himself time to answer her inquiry for his health. “You must let me have the service of your little page, my child; you must let me take him with me instantly.”

“Morgante!—What can he do for you, Francesco?”

“Every thing. Our holy father, the Pope, like his most blessed prototype, the lowly Jesus, says, ‘Let the little children come unto me!’—These words, embroidered in crimson, and sparkling in gems, are suspended over the head of our Sovereign Pontiff, when he passes through the gallery leading from St. Peter’s to the Vatican; ere he enters his palace, he turns, and it is then that from the hands of little children he receives

the petitions of his people—I must convey one to him, lady Juliet; and it must be Morgante who shall deliver it.”

The boy was called, and readily agreed to accompany the old man, who promised that he should return in a few hours. He did so, and assured Juliet, with great satisfaction, that he was very sure the fingers of his Holiness closed firmly over the paper he had given him, as his own little thumb had been fortunate enough to share the pressure.

That day was Thursday; and it was at the congregation which was held that night, that his Holiness at length yielded to the reasonings of the Abbot Isidore, and consented that the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s should be summoned to take her trial before the holy tribunal of the Inquisition, both for the imputed crime of releasing a condemned nun, and for other scandalous practices brought against her in accusation, from another quarter.

Friday was the day of the week, which at that time was set apart by the holy office, for the

commencement of all such new trials as were of especial interest; and Isidore, confident in the final result of his endeavours, was perfectly prepared for immediately bringing forward that of Geraldine d'Albano.

It has been said, that at this time the office of Grand Inquisitor was no longer vested in one person, but that its powers were delegated to the whole college of Cardinals, whose decisions were subject to the final and absolute judgment of the Pope. It had, therefore, been the anxious care of Isidore to influence as many of this body as possible, against the Abbess of Sant' Catharina's, by conveying to them, as if from various quarters, statements of heretical doctrines which she was said to have encouraged.

How far he had succeeded, he had no power of knowing. The cautious secrecy of Inquisitors was hardly greater in their commerce with the world, than with each other; and when the dark conclave met for their fearful business, within the secret chambers of the holy office, the trembling prisoner, who had been blindly led

through its recesses, and only restored to the use of his eyes when placed in the midst of his sable judges, was hardly more ignorant who the individuals might be, who at that moment constituted the court, than each member was of all the rest. When the business of the hour began, indeed, the voices of such as spoke announced them to their fellows; but even this was often avoided by the cautious whisper, which doomed a wretch to torture or to death, from beneath the shelter of an Inquisitor's cowl.

It was almost with a feeling of gladness that Geraldine d'Albano saw, on the fourteenth day of her sad and solitary confinement, her door open, and two men enter, clothed in long loose garments of sable serge, and wearing black velvet masks upon their faces. They approached her chair, and each taking her gently by the arm, caused her to rise, leading her across the room, and down the marble stairs into a hall, where a small covered litter, surrounded by men dressed like themselves, stood ready to receive her. In this litter she was immediately placed,

its leather curtains being carefully secured round her, and then raised by the men who stood beside it. She was carried in this manner for about half an hour, when the bearers stopped; and Geraldine heard the opening of heavy gates. The next moment she was again borne forward, and was presently conscious of being conveyed down a long flight of stairs; at the bottom of these another short pause preceded the opening of a door; after which, not even the closely-fastened curtains that surrounded her, could prevent her being conscious of the damp freshness of the air she was breathing.

The men now moved rapidly along, as if anxious to bring their labour to a close; three times they stopped, while doors were opened to admit them, after which the litter was placed upon the ground, the leather curtains were drawn aside, and a hand extended to assist her leaving it. As soon as she had done so, she endeavoured to discover what species of abode was now prepared for her; but the light was not enough to permit her seeing the form or extent

of the chamber; the litter she had left was immediately raised from the ground, and carried out; she heard the door close; silence the most profound followed, and a few minutes of misty examination sufficed to convince her that she was once more alone.

There was much in the obscurity, the chillness, and low-arched gloom of the apartment, to appal a timid spirit; and the Abbess sighed, as she deliberately surveyed its quaint and ingenious architecture, to think how many wretched beings had, probably, shrunk in trembling terror from the empty darkness of its remote recesses. But it was not by such devices that Geraldine could be made to suffer, and her survey completed, she sat down on a stone bench against the wall, removing, almost without a shudder, the chain which hung from a staple inserted in it. One stage of suffering was past, and she rejoiced at it. Her spirits relieved from the dreadful monotony of her late confinement, in a great degree recovered their accustomed energy. She knew to a certainty, that she was in the

hands of an inveterate enemy; she knew also that his power was considerable, but she was not ignorant of her own. She had raised the reputation of a rich endowment from the contempt and scorn which had fallen upon it, to a state that might have satisfied the utmost ambition of its pious founder; she knew that she had deserved and obtained the esteem of those, whose righteous wishes she had for years righteously fulfilled, and this conviction, backed by her firm but humble reliance on the Power who ever sustains the pure in heart, enabled her to await with passive fortitude whatever might ensue. Several hours passed, after her removal, before her new prison was visited. At length a door on the opposite side from that by which she had entered, was opened, and a figure precisely similar to those she had already seen, entered, and set a bowl of soup, some bread, and a pitcher of water beside her, on the bench where she sat, and again left the room; she took the refreshment, and it appeared that she had been watched from without, as she did so, for as soon

as she had finished her meal, the door again opened ; and now two men entered, one of whom immediately tied a handkerchief over her eyes, and then each taking gently hold of her arms as before, led her between them for a considerable distance. When they stopped, the bandage was removed from her eyes, and she found herself in a large hall, hung entirely with black, which, notwithstanding the lamps which were suspended from the arched ceiling, produced exactly the sombre effect so aptly described by a modern bard—

Not darkness—but light that was dead.

It was some time before she could distinguish the audience before whom she stood ; but when her eyes had become accustomed to the faint lights, and ill-defined shadows which marked their outlines, she perceived that immediately before her were many rows of black figures, all habited exactly alike, with their heads deeply enveloped in cowls. They were ranged in a semicircle, one row being on the level of the floor, and the others raised by equal intervals

above it. Between these, her judges, and herself, was a long table, also covered with black, at which were placed four sable figures with the implements for writing before them.

A profound silence of several minutes followed her entrance, and then she heard a voice proclaim her name and titles from so dark and distant a part of the chamber, that she could not justly ascertain whence it proceeded. She did not answer, and the words were repeated, but evidently from another part of the room. Geraldine almost smiled at the idle mummary, and replied distinctly—

“ I am here.”

“ Geraldine d’Albano,” said a low and tremulous voice from among the figures who sat before her,—“ Geraldine d’Albano, you are here to answer to a charge of most foul heresy,”—the speaker paused, and Geraldine answered firmly—

“ Who is my accuser ?”

“ Write !” said another voice from the bench.

“ Geraldine d’Albano,” repeated the same feeble voice, “ you are not here to question, but

to answer.—Do you hold sacred, entire, and with no shade of most accursed innovation, the true catholic and apostolic doctrine of the only holy church as received at Rome?”

“ I do hold sacred, entire, and with no shade of most accursed innovation, the true catholic and apostolic doctrine of the only church in which it has been my blessed fortune to be bred.”

“ Write !” said a voice which even in that single word, and from the depth of the smothering cowl, sounded friendly and approving.

“ Yea, write !” said another voice trembling with agitation ; “ but write carefully—by Heaven she palters with us.”

Geraldine in an instant knew that this was the voice of Isidore.

The vehemence of the exclamation appeared to excite a general murmur. Several minutes elapsed before silence was perfectly restored.

Another voice then spoke.

“ Geraldine d’Albano, do you know the interior of the vaults used for the confinement or interment of criminals in the convent dedicated

to Sant' Catherina's of Siena, situated near Ancona?"

"Perfectly," replied the prisoner.

"Write," proceeded from several voices at once.

"You know the interior of these vaults perfectly. How came you to be thus acquainted with them? Recollect yourself."

"When I was made Abbess of the convent of Sant' Catherina's, the master key of every part of the building was delivered to me by the usual authorities; and on that same day I made a progress through the whole edifice, neither the vaults for the burial of the dead, nor those for the punishment of the living, were omitted."

"Have you never visited them since that day?" said an Inquisitor—and again Geraldine recognised the voice of Isidore.

"I know not, most venerable judges," she said, "how great licence of reply is allowed a prisoner before your august tribunal; but if permitted, I would answer the person who last questioned me, by coming at once to the point at which I know he aims."

A profound silence followed these words, which Geraldine construed as permission to proceed, and she was about to do so, when a cowed head leaned forward from the lower range of seats, and bending towards one of the secretaries, uttered eagerly the word, "write !" She at once felt her danger, and determined to say nothing that was not rendered necessary by a direct question.

It appeared, however, that they expected her to proceed, for several minutes elapsed before another word was spoken. The voice of Isidore then repeated the former question :—

"Geraldine d'Albano, have you ever visited these dungeons, since the day that you saw them in your progress round the building, on occasion of your installation?"

"I have."

"At what time? and for what purpose?"

"The time was about two months ago—the purpose was to examine the dungeon, previous to the immurement of a nun within them, for breach of vows."

“ Write !” again sounded from several voices.

“ For what reason did you make this examination ?” said a hoarse voice which was not that of Isidore.

“ For the purpose of ascertaining the truth of a tradition, extant in my convent, concerning the execution of a similar offender. It was only by tradition, that I knew how such deeds were treated at Sant’ Catherina’s—none such have chanced, since I held rule there.”

“ She speaks the truth,” was uttered in a tone of authority from the higher seat.

“ But wherefore did you deem this examination necessary, Geraldine d’Albano ?”

“ It was rather a feeling of-interest, than of necessity, which occasioned it.”

“ And what was the result ?”

“ I was unable to judge what the mode of punishment was to be.”

“ But you ascertained this afterwards, Geraldine d’Albano ?” said the voice of Bartone.

“ Never,” she replied firmly.

“Were you not present at the execution of the sentence?” was pronounced from the higher seats.

“I was not.”

“Was it not the duty of the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s to witness the fulfilment of the sentence?” said the same voice.

“It was, but nature sank under the horror of it. When the judges went to witness the ceremony of degradation, and all that was to follow, my senses failed me, and I was left as one dead, on the floor of my convent parlour.”

“Then you knew that death, a painful and lingering death, must inevitably ensue?” these words were spoken by the same friendly voice which had before cheered her.

“I did,” was the reply.

Again a whispered murmur passed along the misty lines of judges and of counsellors, and the uncertain outlines of the large and shapeless cowl varied, as the heads they concealed communicated with those around.

“Members of your own sisterhood attended

on you, through this swooning?" said an Inquisitor.

"I think so—but the friendly voice that first met my returning sense, was that of a noble lady, who, if she might be questioned here, would not shrink from confirming my words."

"Your noble niece, perhaps," said Isidore.

"I speak of the holy mother, Santa Christina, Abbess of St. Ildefonse," replied Geraldine.

"How may this be?" said an Inquisitor. "It is on record, that this holy Abbess was herself of the court who sat in judgment on the apostate nun; she too must have witnessed its execution."

"I trust," said Geraldine—and for the first time she spoke with some degree of trepidation—"I trust I have done my noble friend no wrong by naming her; but sure I am, it was she who stood beside me, when I opened my eyes from the darkness which fell upon them, when the bell called us to the fearful ceremony."

"Geraldine d'Albano, this could hardly be—your senses were still wandering, and what you

wished to see, you might easily fancy was before you."

A moment passed before Geraldine would trust her voice—and then she said—

"If the pledged word of Geraldine d'Albano be doubted in a court, formed from the church of Rome, it is time she ceased to speak; she thought she had been better known here."

"Change of circumstance will often lead to change of nature," said the same hoarse voice, that had before spoken. "The honoured Abbess of Sant' Catherina's, and the accomplice of an apostate nun, can hardly be listened to with the same confidence."

"Enough of this," said an Inquisitor from the upper seats, standing up as he spoke—and then added:—

"If it be required by the court, the Abbess of St. Ildefonse is ready to appear before it; she is in Rome."

"Enough," repeated another voice, and in an instant, a whisper that was spreading through the court, was hushed to perfect silence.

“After recovering from your deadly swoon, you were doubtless left to quiet and repose,” said the hoarse Inquisitor.

“The Abbess of St. Ildefonse passed the night in my chamber,”—replied the prisoner.

“How? — The Abbess of St. Ildefonse remained absent from her convent during the night?—this must have caused most strange dismay throughout her community. Recollect yourself.”

“The Abbess of St. Ildefonse is in Rome,” repeated the voice which had before proclaimed this fact.

“Enough!” was again uttered in the same tone of authority that had twice silenced all.

“Lead back the prisoner,” said the Fiscal Proctor, who stood at the top of the table, ready to receive the whispered orders of those behind him; and, in a moment, the eyes of Geraldine were again covered, and she was led forward by two men, each holding her by an arm. When the bandage was removed, she found herself in the same dark chamber, where

she had been placed before her examination ; and was now more sensible than before of the cold desolation of its appearance. But she was not disposed to repine. She felt conscious that great as was the peril in which she stood, she was not without powerful friends to support her, and she seated herself again on the rugged bench, stedfast both in hope and endurance.

Ere her memory had half recapitulated the scene which had passed, the door by which she had originally entered was again opened, and two of the same dark figures approached her once more. Her eyes were silently blinded, and again she was led out of the room. After walking some distance, one of her conductors pronounced the word "stairs," and she was led up a long flight of steps, so narrow as to oblige one of those who led her, to quit his hold. Having reached the top, he again took his station by her side, and so proceeded till another door was opened to receive them, when the bandage being removed from her eyes, she had the satis-

faction of perceiving that she was in a small room, hung with rude tapestry, and lighted by a grated window, too near the ceiling, indeed, to prevent her looking from it; but affording her both the light and air of Heaven; a chair and a table occupied the middle of the room, and in one corner of it was a low pallet bed.

Her conductors instantly left her; but not even the harsh sound of the key that secured her door, so grating, under all circumstances, to the ear of a prisoner, could chill the glow of hope, which this change of accommodation produced. It was not the increased comfort that cheered her, though that was something; but it was the undoubted evidence which this afforded, that she was no longer in the hands of Isidore, which calmed her spirits, and rendered her almost fearless for the result. It was now that she felt the full advantage of Juliet's wise and tender care for her. Not only was it impossible to prove that she had assisted in the escape of Camilla; but the more all those who had sur-

rounded her were questioned concerning the time it took place, the more clearly must it be shown, that she could have had no share in it.

Her supper was brought, and set with decent observance before her ; and when the light failed, one of her masked attendants placed a lamp upon her table. Thankful, serene, and almost happy in her solitary prison, Geraldine retired early to rest, and fell asleep, while the image of Juliet, radiant from the happiness of a reunion with her, still floated before her fancy.

Far different was the watchful night of Bartone. It was passed in communion with the monk, Dominic, who bade him rest securely on the overwhelming testimony which he should bring against his enemy on the morrow, at the very moment that her besotted judges, and her own pampered spirit, should deem her trial past.

“ We may fail to prove her connivance in the escape of the nun,” said di Pino ; “ they may even bring evidence to prove that it was impossible. What then ? Can this obliterate the

burning shame these eyes have witnessed? Think it not, Bartone. Thou shalt see her yet, hiding her dishonoured face with her hands, and cursing even the dim light of her dark trial chamber."

Never did music sound more sweetly to the ear, than did the hoarse accents of Dominic to the soul of Isidore; he heaped golden promises upon his head; he boasted largely of his power and secret influence; he numbered the vows of those who had promised to support him; yet still he was not satisfied. Again and again he made his confederate repeat the hateful charges, that he knew must blast her pure name for ever; and then, through the long hours of night, he listened unwearied to the proofs he showed, that none could witness for her in this matter, but that all must conspire to prove her guilty. It was settled between them, that the whole weight of the examination which was to overwhelm her on the morrow, should proceed from Di Pino, Isidore only aiding him, from time to time, by such questions, as his intimate knowledge of her

character might suggest, as most likely to shake her fortitude. The dome of St. Peter's was already bright in the morning sun, when Isidore and di Pino retired to rest, yet both were present at the early mass performed within its gorgeous walls; and both were waiting, with all the energy of well-recruited strength, for the hour at which they were to steal from the light of day into the dark judgment-hall of the Inquisition.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

L'homme superbe est renversé,
Ses propres flèches l'ont percé.

RACINE.

JULIET passed this interval in a state of the most miserable disappointment and uncertainty. Father Laurence did not come near her, and she saw no more of Garroni; even Morgante's gay spirit was utterly quenched, and Olive tormented her by unaccountable moans, wailings, and lamentations concerning the state of her soul, which she declared to be given over finally and for ever to perdition. The bodily sickness, of which she had complained, was healed, she said—but she

was now suffering from what was infinitely worse, namely, the goads and stings of an offended conscience. All this was repeated many times, before Juliet could withdraw her attention from her own engrossing anxieties, sufficiently to listen to her ; but at length, some strong expression of self-reproach induced her to inquire what it was to which she alluded, and what crime she could have committed, which called for a repentance so vehement.

“ Oh, Signora !” said the girl with the tone of a person much comforted, “ you will ask me at last then ? I thought I should burst and die—and nobody know wherefore—oh, Signora !”

“ But what is it, Olive ? It is no good for me to ask, you know, if you only answer by exclamations.—What is the matter, Olive ?”

“ I am the greatest sinner alive, Signora—that’s the matter,—always save and except Father Laurence, though—he is ten thousand times worse than I am—he promised not to leave me, for one single moment, all the whole time I was at Rome, and to show me St. Peter’s, and the

Pope, and all the cardinals ; instead of which you see how he treats me, Signora."

Juliet thought that she had much greater reason to complain of the Confessor's desertion, than her waiting-woman. But she agreed, that it was extremely wrong in him to keep himself thus out of the way, when he must well know he would be so greatly wanted.

"Wanted, Signora !—Holy mother, you have no great need to want him—it would be well for you and your's, if you had never found him—the traitor ! To wheedle me from my true allegiance, and leave me to break my heart by myself." The girl sobbed aloud, but evidently as much from passion as from sorrow.

"If you wish me to give you any comfort, Olive," said her mistress, "you must let me understand the cause of your distress. What is it that Father Laurence has done, to deserve these bitter reproaches ? I think he certainly ought not to have been so long without returning to me ; yet it is possible, that his earnest desire to serve my aunt may be the reason of it."

“ He desire to serve her ! The traitor ! He has come here himself, and brought me too, for no other reason under heaven, but to blacken and defame her ! ”

“ Holy Virgin ! What is it you mean, Olive ? ”

“ I mean, Signora, what is worse than I have any power to say. I believe the devil has been tampering with Father Laurence, in the form of that dark monk, Dominic ; and then he tampered with me—poor innocent girl that I am ! ”

“ But what evil can he wish my aunt ? For God’s sake, speak intelligibly. ”

“ Signora, I am ashamed to do it.—Your aunt took little notice of him—and none of me—that is all the real harm I know against her.—True it is, I saw her walk off into our woods at Albano, looking more like an angel than a nun—and Father Laurence says she went to meet her lover there—and it is to say that same word before the cardinals, who are to be all dressed up in black, that he has brought me here—but, oh, what joy and pleasure did he promise me ! and does he think, the traitor ! that I am to be shut

up here, with a score of proud old women, while he swaggers through the gay streets, looking with a merry eye at every bold hussy he happens to meet by the way—and then, perhaps, he will come to me to-morrow morning, as smooth as velvet, and say, ‘Olive, my good girl, come with me;’ but he does not know Olive Normo yet.”

Inexpressibly astonished, Juliet listened to this tirade without uttering a word in reply. She liked neither her Confessor nor her maid over well; but that they should have entered into so infamous a plot to destroy her aunt, appeared perfectly inconceivable; and she hesitated to believe her, even though she accused herself.

“You look as if you did not hear a word that I said, Signora;” cried the girl, piqued at the little impression her information seemed to have produced; “and yet, methinks, it were as well you listened to me.”

“I do listen to you, Olive,” replied Juliet, with much emotion; “but your statement is so

very extraordinary, that I know not how to believe it."

"It is true, as that Christ is in heaven," replied the girl. "Perhaps you may believe me, Signora, when he comes at last, and makes some excuse to take me out with him."

"You say right, Olive," answered Juliet, with sudden earnestness. "If this happens, atone at once for all the evil you have done and thought against us, by letting me go in your place. When I have put on your clothes, and wrapped your large black veil around me, there can be no danger of his discovering me. He means to lead you to the prison of the Inquisition, my poor girl; you might, perchance, die with terror there,—but I shall not fear it.—My cousin, the Cardinal, will be there, and he will shield me."

"The traitor!" again ejaculated Olive; "do you really think, Signora, that he meant to lead me to those horrid dungeons, that I know it is dangerous even to name, instead of taking me

to see all the beautiful priests dressed out at St. Peter's?"

"I have no doubt of it, Olive. He has misled you sadly, my poor girl; but behave as I would have you now, and I will not only forgive, but most richly reward you;" and, as an earnest of this, Juliet gave her two or three pieces of gold coin.

"What a fool I have been!" exclaimed Olive; "for, after all is said and owned, Father Laurence never gave me above the value of two gold pieces in his life; and now I shall be rewarded as I ought, and have a safe conscience into the bargain."

This day also, which was that of the Abbess's first examination, wore away without bringing either Father Laurence or Garroni to the convent; but, at an early hour the following morning, the strange history of Olive was confirmed by the arrival of the Confessor, who replied to all the inquiries of Juliet, by assuring her, that he and his friends would leave nothing undone

that could assist her noble aunt. Having suffered the conversation to last as long as he thought decency required, he took his leave, saying, as he left the parlour, that he would speak a word to the poor girl Olive, before he went, as he had promised to take care of her in the new and strange scene, into which their present melancholy circumstances had brought them. Juliet made no objection to this, but said that it would perhaps be more convenient for Olive to wait upon him in the parlour.—He thanked her humbly for her condescending kindness, and re-entered the room, while Juliet retired from the parlour to send Olive to him. She found her prepared for the summons; for some sisters of the house, who had heard her incessant lamentations on his not appearing, had good-humouredly hastened to inform her, that he was arrived at last.

“Will you be true to me now, Olive?” said Juliet in strong agitation. “Will you feign to receive him kindly; and if, indeed, he propose

that you should follow him, will you consent to do so, and hasten hither, that I may take your place?"

"I will, lady Juliet," said Olive, preparing to leave the room, "and to your generosity I will trust, to reward me for losing his good-will thereby—the traitor!"

A very few minutes brought her back again, triumphant at the proof she could now offer of her sincerity.

"He hardly thought it worth his while to ask my pardon," she said, as she began to dress her mistress. "'Make haste, Olive, I have no time to spare,' was the most of his greeting; but I will watch him, the traitor!"

Juliet so nearly resembled her maid in stature, that when she had put on her dress, and enveloped her head in the thick veil, without which no woman, who affected to be above the very lowest class, could appear in the streets, it was quite impossible for any eye to discover the imposition. She immediately hastened to the outer

door of the convent, where, as Olive informed her, she would find the Confessor loitering.

“ You must follow him, Signora,” said the well-taught soubretta, “ not walk beside him, and by no means speak to him.”

Juliet obeyed these instructions, and soon found herself rapidly following the active steps of Father Laurence through the streets of Rome. The whole scene was so new and so strange to her, that she feared to lose sight of him for an instant, lest she should get irretrievably bewildered in the crowded streets, and kept her eyes immoveably fixed upon the waving outline of his ample robe, as he swam forward before her.— After a walk which had lasted long enough to weary her, Father Laurence suddenly turned aside from the open street, and led the way through a dirty and obscure passage, which ran between two buildings of great loftiness. When he had threaded this half way, he stopped; and carefully looking before and behind him to ascertain that they were alone, he said :—

“ Now, Olive, dear, we are now near the place, where I shall want you to speak boldly, what I have told you to say. Fear nothing. However dark and dismal the room may be, remember that I shall be close to you, even though you may not see me. Act well in this, my dear girl, and you shall never know sorrow more. Remember all I told you.”

Juliet bowed her head in silence, and the monk was satisfied. Having advanced a few steps farther, he stopped before a low and narrow door, in one of the lofty walls which skirted the passage, and knocking gently, was instantly admitted, followed by Juliet, who, in spite of all the resolution she could call to her aid, trembled in every limb.

The door through which they entered, had appeared to open before them without the assistance of hands, for no person was visible. Father Laurence advanced a few paces into the dark stone passage which received them ; and touching another door in the side wall, it yielded before him, and Juliet, who followed

close, found herself in a small square room, without any visible window, being lighted solely by a lamp suspended from the ceiling. The effect of entering from the clear and living light of noon-day, into the trembling and uncertain glimmer of lamp-light, is always sombre and unpleasant; and Juliet's spirits were in a state to make every external circumstance keenly felt. She shuddered, and perhaps the more painfully, from the vague and unsubstantial nature of her fears; she felt assured, that they were already within the walls of the Inquisition, and this was quite enough to make the heart of an Italian girl sink within her, even had she not believed that the being she loved with all a daughter's fondness, was immured within its fearful dungeons. The Confessor pointed to a seat, and speaking in the cautious whisper, which seemed natural to the place, said, "You will be quite safe here, dear Olive, till I return. No one shall enter to disturb you. Fear nothing."

He then raised the arras, with which the walls

were covered, and retreated by a small door under it.

In substituting herself for Olive, Juliet had acted upon the natural impulse of wishing to place a friend, instead of an enemy, to answer any question that might be asked respecting her aunt. This idea had no sooner suggested itself, than she acted upon it; and the exertion necessary to ensure the success of her project, had been sufficient to engross all her faculties, leaving no interval for meditation on the possible consequences to herself. It was during the hour which followed Father Laurence's retreat, that the fact of her own share in the escape of Camilla first recurred to her memory. Her aunt had, in truth, taken no active part whatever in the transaction, and Juliet knew that there were so many witnesses competent to prove this, that she had hardly, for a moment, suffered herself to doubt the final result of the trial; but now, by her own voluntary act, she had placed the real culprit in the hands of those who were bound by every thing they held most sacred,

to punish the act she had done ; and that, with all the severity with which unbounded power can visit crime.

This conviction rushed upon her mind with such fulness, and force of truth, that, for a time, she felt perfectly overwhelmed by it. Her heart seemed cold within her bosom, and had she been required at that moment to speak, her parched tongue and trembling lips would have given evidence of the extremity of terror, which had seized upon her. But it was not long that this enslaving weakness could keep possession of the generous and devoted heart of Juliet. She again forgot herself, and the possible peril which might await her, in the exhilarating hope of serving Geraldine ; and though she doubted not, that she still possessed the power of retreat, yet felt no wish to avail herself of it.

She remembered the ease with which the doors, through which they had passed, yielded to a touch, and thought that if she were indeed within the walls of the Inquisition, she had not yet reached that portion of it, from whence

those who enter, cannot retreat. She had come voluntarily; and the feeling that now caused her to approach the door by which she entered, hardly amounted to a doubt, that she could retreat in the same manner if she wished it; but she found it locked.

She then raised the arras, and examined the doorway by which the Confessor had retreated; this too resisted her attempt to open it; and she became aware that she was already a prisoner; but, at the same moment, the conviction that Father Laurence could have no possible wish to entrap Olive into the power of the Inquisition, prevented the discovery from affecting her, as it would have done, had she believed herself known to those who had made her so.

For nearly two hours she was left alone to meditate on her strange situation, when the door beneath the arras was opened, and Father Laurence re-appeared, followed by two familiars.

“I am sorry to have been so long absent, my daughter,” said he, as he entered; “but I could not avoid it. I trust that you have suf-

ferred no idle fears to get hold of you, my good girl? There is no occasion, my daughter; you are come in a good cause, and all such are protected here."

He then took from the arm of one of the officials, a long black robe and hood, in which he told his companions that she must envelope herself.

"The noble judges of this sacred court," said Father Laurence, with a reverential whine, intended to win the approbation of the officials, "are especially careful that all such as bear witness against the accused heretics, whom it is their holy duty to punish, shall be hid from the eyes of all men, that so their virtuous testimony may never bring them into trouble."

Juliet wrapped the heavy garment around her, and gladly enveloped her head in the impenetrable shelter of its large hood.

"It is not needful that you should see your way, my daughter," continued the Confessor; "these gentlemen will guide you safely."

One of the men unceremoniously pulled the

hood over her face, and each taking hold of an arm, turned her round, and then led her forward, but in such a manner as to render her quite uncertain by which door they made their exit.

“Stairs to descend,” was uttered close to her ear soon after she began to move; but her effort to obey the intimation was hardly necessary, for she was more carried than led down them.

Her conductors stopped at intervals, as if arrested by a door, but no sound, either of their opening or closing it, met her ear. At length it appeared that she had reached her destination; the familiars quitted their hold, and she heard low voices, as if at the distant part of a large chamber. Juliet raised her hand, and removed the hood and veil sufficiently to enable her to perceive the objects before her; but they were so dim and indistinct, that it was long ere she was at all sure what it was she saw. The hall she stood in was the same as that in which the Abbess had been examined; but

Juliet was stationed in an obscure and distant part of it.

As by degrees she recovered her composure, she was able, through the awful stillness of the chamber, to distinguish what passed at that end of it which was occupied by the tribunal. The circular seats were not as yet all filled; but at intervals, a dusky figure, with noiseless step, entered, she knew not how, and glided among those who had already taken their places on them. The four secretaries were stationed at the table, and the Fiscal Proctor was conversing in a whisper with some of the members of the court, who had not yet taken their seats.

At length the semi-circle of dark cowl was completed, and her heart bounded with violent emotion, as the Fiscal Proctor pronounced:—

“Lead in the prisoner.”

Immediately, without the slightest sound being perceptible, three dark figures were visible at the bottom of the table in front of the tribunal. They were all so completely concealed by the

long loose dresses they wore, that Juliet felt no assurance that she beheld her aunt, till she heard her name proclaimed in the same manner as on the former day.

Geraldine did not now wait for a repetition of the summons, but immediately answered, "I am here."

It would be difficult to describe the emotion, with which Juliet listened to her voice. The fear and sorrow which her perilous situation inspired, could not conquer the pleasure of knowing that she was again near her, and the tears that started to her eyes were those of joy.

The first voice that spoke, issued from the lower bench, and though Juliet had so seldom heard it, she instantly knew that it was the Abbot of St. Andrea's who addressed the prisoner.

"Geraldine d'Albano, the examination of yesterday went to show, that by artifice, such as the spirit of evil is often known to inspire, you have contrived to conceal the part you had in

the escape of the accursed heretic and perjured nun Camilla, from the dungeons of your convent. I cannot be blinded by this subtile trickery—for I know you—but there are others, to whom all men are bound to bow their minds, who deem you innocent. Innocent therefore you are, from all that, in my humble duty to the church, I have deposed against you.”

The extacy of Juliet, on hearing these unexpected words, was so great, that totally forgetful of the tremendous presence in which she stood, she was springing forward to throw herself into the arms of her aunt. Happily Father Laurence was close beside her, and the tight grasp of his powerful arm at once restored her recollection.

The words were not less welcome, and hardly less unexpected to Geraldine, than to her niece; but she only bowed her head in answer to them, and waited, without further movement, to learn the pleasure of the court concerning her.

Isidore had risen to speak, and when he

ceased, replaced himself upon the bench ; but he had scarcely done so, when another figure arose at a short distance from him, and in a voice whose deep hoarse tone might have made any words sound alarming, he said :—

“ Geraldine d’Albano, I too have somewhat to say concerning you ; and may the ears, which can only hear to understand aright, listen to me, and to you !”

He ceased : and silence like that of the grave followed. He seemed to pause, that his words might be pondered, and understood by all. After the interval of some minutes, he addressed the Fiscal Proctor, but the only words he pronounced were—“ The oath !”

The officer then raised aloft the large crucifix of ebony that lay upon the table, while the familiars led the prisoner forward, and placed her right hand upon the Evangelists. The Fiscal Proctor repeated the oath, binding the person taking it to speak nothing but the truth, and Geraldine bowed her head, which was received in testimony of assent to it.

“ Now then,” said the hoarse Inquisitor, “ answer me !”

“ Geraldine d’Albano, did you, on the twentieth day of June last, walk in a wood or forest on the domain of the Count d’Albano near Torre Vecchia ?”

“ I did.”

“ Did you, on that day, and in that place, meet a young man dressed in green and silver ?”

“ I did.”

“ Write !” exclaimed the voice of Isidore.

“ Did you,” continued the former voice, “ on that day, and in that same wood or forest, suffer that young man, in vesture of green and silver, to kneel at your feet ?”

“ My gracious judges,” said the Abbess firmly, “ if I answer YES to this, though the word should be true, the inference would be most foully false ; yet can I not explain it, without doing wrong to one most near and dear to me.”

“ Geraldine d’Albano,” said a voice from the

higher bench, "you are sworn to answer truly, let the consequence be what it may."

The same harsh voice that had questioned her before, then resumed:—

"Did that youth in green and silver kneel at your feet, and kiss your hand?"

"He did!"

"Write!" said the voice of Bartone.

"Is this enough? or shall I question further?" said the examining Inquisitor, turning round, and addressing those above him.

Many voices were now heard conferring together, though their low tone prevented what they said, from being distinctly audible; till one, not louder than the rest, but having that accent of authority which enforces hearing, uttered these words:—

"Let not appearances abuse you, brethren. This holy Abbess spake the truth, when she said, that the inference you would draw from her avowal would be foully false."

"Misericordia et Justitia!" exclaimed the

Inquisitor who had examined her, raising his arms to heaven, as he quoted the inscription of the holy banner:—"Blessed be the union! yet let not the first deface the last. Call forward those who witnessed this abomination."

The Fiscal Proctor spoke to a familiar near him, and Father Laurence was led forward. The crucifix was again raised and the oath administered, but he was not summoned by name, nor was any indication given, who or from whence he might be.

"Witness! speak according to your oath, and say if you ever saw Geraldine d'Albano do aught that was inconsistent either with her vow as a professed nun, or her high station as an anointed Abbess?"

"I have."

"What have you seen?"

"I have seen her, during the month of June last past, wandering in the woods near the castle of Albano, divested of her holy weeds, and wearing no mark of her religious calling, or her conventual rank."

“ Know you aught else ?”

“ I know that she was seen in an attitude of unchaste endearment with a man.”

“ How know you this ?”

“ By the word of a most holy priest, who himself witnessed the foul abomination.”

Again the venerable court was agitated by an evident diversity of opinion ; but the word “ Silence !” uttered by the voice that seemed gifted with a power to hush all tumult, once more restored order.

“ There is another witness,” said the examining Inquisitor ; “ let her appear.”

Juliet was now led forward. From the moment she had heard her aunt declared innocent of the escape of Camilla, the most perfect calmness and self-possession had returned to her ; the accusation which followed appeared to her, in comparison, as light as air ; and when she was at length called upon to answer, she did so without the slightest hesitation or faltering.

The oath was administered to her in the usual form, and she was addressed by the same

equivocal appellation of "witness," without any further designation.

"Witness, speak according to your oath. Do you know Geraldine d'Albano?"

"I do," was uttered in accents clear and firm, by the silver voice of Juliet.

"Who is that?" said an Inquisitor, starting on his feet.

"A sworn witness," answered an aged voice from above. "The examination must proceed."

The examining Inquisitor was still on his feet, but hesitated for a moment, till "proceed!" was again repeated from above. The same question was then put, and nearly in the same words, as that first addressed to Father Laurence.

"Have you ever seen or heard this Geraldine d'Albano do, or say, aught inconsistent with her vow as a professed nun?"

"Never!" was the unexpected reply, and the effect produced by this single word was so great, that many minutes elapsed, before even the voice which was heard above all else, could restore the silence it commanded.

The examining Inquisitor had sat down amid the tumult, but when order was at length restored, he did not resume the investigation.

An old and evidently feeble man, on the higher bench, then rose to supply his place.

“ Speak, witness, according to your oath,” he repeated, solemnly.—“ Know you aught of the interview that has been spoken of between Geraldine d’Albano, and a young man who met her in the woods of Albano ?”

“ I do.”

“ Recollect yourself, and on your oath tell all you know.”

“ That youth was my affianced husband,” said Juliet, solemnly : “ I am niece to the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s; and when she yielded her consent to our union, her accepted nephew offered homage and thanks upon his bended knee.”

“ Enough !” uttered the pre-eminent voice from above; but at the same time Isidore started on his feet, and exclaimed—

“ How is this ?—novice of Sant’ Catherina’s, how is this ? Did your saintly aunt receive a

lover's vows for you, and then lead you as a novice to her cloister?"

"She did!" replied Juliet, nothing daunted: "for such," she added, after a moment's impressive pause,—“for such was my father's will."

"Enough!" again uttered the voice from above:—"Juliet d'Albano is now her noble father's heiress,—and may her love and faith to the husband of her choice, equal in courage and constancy what she has this day shown to her illustrious aunt!"

There was a power in the voice that spoke these words which seemed to make itself felt, as if by magic;—not only was every other hushed to listen to it, but when it ceased, a deep drawn breath appeared to relieve the profound attention with which it had been heard.

Juliet guessed not who spoke—but the unlooked-for kindness overpowered her, and she stretched out a hand to those who stood near her, for support. It was one of the dark officials who approached to sustain her; Father Laurence

was no longer near; and it is probable, that the deep shadows of that ample room never before appeared so welcome to those they fell upon, as they did at that moment to him.

There was now a movement among the Inquisitors who filled the highest bench, and who were of no lesser rank than the Cardinals of Rome, as though they would approach the noble prisoner, where still she stood before them; but one amongst them made a sign with his raised arm, and they remained stationary. A word was then whispered in the ear of the Fiscal Proctor, who immediately proclaimed aloud—

“ This trial is not ended, but adjourned.— The court will meet to-morrow; the prisoner is again remanded to answer what then shall further be brought against her.”

On this, the familiars once more took possession of their prisoner, and Geraldine was again led to her solitary prison. She was somewhat startled at the final event of the day, which seemed to leave her fate still doubtful; but experienced delight, beyond the power of any fear

to check, at the noble daring, and the devoted affection, of her adopted child. How she had contrived, at a moment of such critical importance, to find her way into the presence of the tribunal, was a mystery too great for her even to attempt to understand; nor did she waste a thought upon it.—That Juliet had again saved her, was certain; and the conviction of this caused her a degree of happiness, which no detail of particulars could much increase. Yet even this satisfaction was not long denied her. Within a quarter of an hour after she had re-entered her prison, the door of it was again unbarred, and a figure appeared, led by two familiars, whose whole person was concealed by an enormous cloak and hood. The men first closed the door behind them, and then returned to remove the blinding disguise from their new prisoner, when Geraldine discovered, with feelings not difficult to conceive, that Juliet, her friend, her daughter, and her deliverer, was brought to share her confinement.

We have too many scenes of greater importance

before us, to permit any lengthened description of this delightful interview; never was that wise saw, “It is not the *WHERE* but the *WHO*, that makes happiness, or misery,” more perfectly exemplified than on this occasion, when two delicate females, shut up to pass the night in a chamber of the Inquisition, with one hard pallet between them on which to rest, felt in possession of more full contentment than had ever fallen to the lot of either, when sheltered by the stately roofs they called their homes. They slept not much, but when towards the morning, their hearts relieved of all that weighed upon them, they lay down together on their sorry couch, the sweet and profound rest they enjoyed, was well worth all the lighter slumber of a long night’s ordinary repose.

They discussed, but not with any feeling of serious alarm, the business that was announced for the morrow. Juliet fancied that she could guess the subject of it—but so great was her delight in watching the calm and sweet serenity of her aunt’s countenance, that she would not

disturb it by any mention of what she knew would send back her fancy to brood and mourn over the past.

Geraldine herself spoke of it lightly.

“I know the voice that announced it, Juliet,” said she, while something like a smile was on her lips, “but you do not; I have been greatly favoured—and I suspect,” she added, in a low whisper, as she laid her head beside that of Juliet, on their pillow—“I suspect that it was not so much Geraldine d’Albano they were determined to acquit, as their trusty and well-beloved servant, the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s—Isidore knows not the court of Rome so well as I do, Juliet.”

The officials of the Inquisition entered the prison of Geraldine on the following morning, at nearly the same hour as before, to lead her and her companion into the hall of judgment. There were now four of them, who still preserved the same implicit silence, and wore the same impenetrable masks as before; but there was evidently more of respect and decorum in their

manner of throwing over their prisoners the dark garb which was to envelope them. They were led, blindly and carefully as before, into the presence of the awful tribunal, and as soon as their guides quitted their hold, they arranged their hoods in such a manner as to see all that passed, as distinctly as the dim light of the sable chamber would permit.

They had been left by their guides standing close together, at a short distance from the place where prisoners were stationed to be examined, and a moment afterwards, seats were brought for them, which they occupied, upon a sign given by the Fiscal Proctor.

The court was already full, and almost immediately after they had taken their seats, the order was spoken aloud—to bring in the prisoner.

With the silent celerity with which all orders there were obeyed, a figure instantly stood before them, as if brought there by magic, for not the slightest sound had been produced by his approach.

From a distant part of the hall, the name of "Francesco Garroni," was pronounced aloud, and a moment after, as if by an echo, it came repeated from the contrary side of the chamber.

"Francesco Garroni is here," replied the prisoner.

On hearing the name of her old pensioner, Geraldine felt more than ever at a loss to conceive what the question was, which should this day be discussed concerning her: but she felt no mixture of alarm, and prepared to listen, with an interest which had very little of selfish feeling in it, to what should follow.

At this moment, the ear of Juliet was sensible of a movement near her; she turned her head, and saw behind the seat she occupied, the dark figure of a man gliding silently away. It was not, however, her quick eye alone that discerned him.

"Officials! let no one pass the doors—neither counsellors nor cardinals, till the court breaks up!" said the same voice, which had created such strong effect the day before.

No sound was heard in answer, but Juliet

fancied that she could discern a slight movement among a group of figures who were standing at one end of the tribunal, as if there were no room for them on the seats.

The Inquisitor, who now rose to examine the prisoner, was one of those seated on the lower bench, and the voice was one which had not been heard in the court, since the trial of Geraldine began.

“ Francesco Garroni, are you prepared to take the oath ?”

“ I am prepared.”

It was then administered as before.

“ Now, recollect yourself, and answer distinctly to such questions as I shall ask. Did you know Caroline, Countess of Albano, the mother of the present Count ?”

“ I knew her well.”

The composure of Geraldine utterly failed her at the mention of her mother’s name ; had she not been seated, the attention of the court would probably have been disturbed—but she struggled against the emotion which assailed her, and lis-

tened, in breathless eagerness, for what was to follow.

“Speak what you know of her,” continued the examiner.

“It is all summed within one dreadful word,” replied Garroni:—“she was a heretic.”

“How know you this?”

“It was a truth she sought not to conceal; I was a servant of some standing in the family of the late Count, when he brought her, as his bride, from England. Had it not been for that foul stain, her coming would have been hailed as a blessing sent from Heaven—and even when this was known to all, there were some among us who avowed their love and reverence for her.”

“Francesco Garroni, were you ever one of these?”

“Never! I trembled when I looked at her; for her marvellous beauty, and her gentle temper, won upon all men—and I feared for my pure faith.—I strove to hate her.”

“Did you succeed in this? or did you, too, fail in the trial?”

The prisoner was silent for a moment, and then replied—

“ My deeds—which I am now before you to confess—will answer that.”

“ Did any in the household embrace her accursed faith ?”

“ None : we were saved from this, by the zeal of one, who, ere the Count had been a year returned, was appointed Confessor at the Castle of Albano.”

“ Who was this holy man ?”

“ Isidore Bartone, a monk of the order of St. Dominic.”

“ How worked his zeal among you ?”

“ By prayer, by fasting, by teaching us to know, that certain destruction here and hereafter must be our lot, if we did not loathe and abhor the infected heretic.”

“ And did all resist the danger ?”

“ All : her noble husband learned to shudder at the fearful crime he had committed, and shunned her presence ; her young son was taught to flee from her, and servants only

retained their places near her, by receiving absolution for the needful, but unwilling service they performed."

"Was your Confessor beloved among you?"

"No; he was feared and hated, save by me; I worshipped him as a saint, already ripe for heaven. Till he came, I lived in daily horror of eternal doom, for the weakness of my hatred towards this specious heretic. I confessed it to him, and he soothed me; he told me that my heart was right, and that I must pray day and night for strength to show my hatred. I did pray, and thought that Heaven heard me—Heaven has heard me since—but then—yet I seemed guarded from the deadly peril by his holy care. Save one, all turned from the daring heretic; save one—husband, son, retainers, all shrank from her, as from death and perdition, save one—and that one was her daughter."

Tears, that most seasonably relieved her swelling heart, rolled down the cheeks of Geraldine at these words; and she almost blessed the lips that spoke them.

“ Write !” was hoarsely murmured by some one on the bench.

“ Yes, write,” repeated the prisoner with emphasis, “ let it be written, that it may atone for my sinful soul on the last day.”

“ What of this daughter ?” said the Inquisitor who had first questioned him ; “ go on.”

“ That daughter clung to her,” continued Garroni, “ and by her tender love seemed to rob all hatred of its sting. I loved the child, and have kneeled for hours before her patron saint, praying that this her filial tenderness might not destroy her. I think these prayers were heard. So docile, so pious, so catholic a child, never knelt to receive absolution ; I think my prayers were heard, but the Confessor told me often, that still he feared for her ; his judgment was, that she must perish everlastingly, unless she became a nun. Loth was I to believe this, for I knew that she would never leave her mother. My lord the Count, who pined beneath the weight of his heavy sin, implored her to consent ; it was the only hope now left, by which he might win heaven ; daily

did his Confessor repeat, that, if his child became a nun, his crime would be forgiven. Years rolled over his head—he was bowed to earth by sin and sorrow, yet still this child resisted. The priest then came to me. He spoke to me as his friend and equal, and I listened to him as to a saint walking upon the earth. He told me that the young Geraldine must surely perish, that the wrath of God was on her—that her accursed mother held her back from heaven, and that nothing but that mother's speedy death could save her innocent child. Day by day, he repeated this to me: day by day, he drew me nearer to him by his flattering kindness. He told me that I was too good, too holy for the world, and offered me a place within his convent—my very soul clung to him.”

The old man ceased to speak, and it was evident to all who heard him, that his strength was failing. A seat was brought for him, and a cordial put to his lips: after the interval of a few moments he resumed, but in a voice so tremulous, that the most earnest atten-

tion was necessary to enable the hearers to distinguish his words—

“ By degrees the Confessor began to hint to me, that he feared he was himself in danger of the wrath of Heaven, for suffering this dreadful fate to overtake the young and pious Geraldine. He told me he had been visited by angels in a dream, who bade him remove the heretic from the earth.”

A heavy groan burst from the breast of Geraldine, and the Fiscal whispered to her a proposal, that she should retire.

“ Not to save my life !” she replied aloud, utterly forgetful of the audience.

“ Let her remain,” was uttered from the bench ; and the examiner again addressed Garroni, bidding him proceed.

“ Cautious and slow,” continued the trembling Garroni, “ cautious and slow were the steps by which he disclosed to me his purpose :—so slow, so cautious, that I saw but a small part of the dreadful deed at once—and that was buried and hid amidst words of godly zeal. But what

avails," exclaimed the old man, suddenly raising his feeble voice to a tone of frightful energy ;—
"What avails that I should seek as slowly to avow the deed I have done—hear it at once !—He bade me poison her—and it was done !"

Garroni rose from the chair on which the attendants had placed him, as he spoke the last words ; but as soon as they were uttered, he sank upon it again, and the officials crowded round him. The floor of the apartment was immediately covered with the counsellors and judges who rushed towards him. They eagerly sought for further particulars of the dreadful crime he had disclosed, but in vain. The old man never spoke again. Geraldine drew towards him, as if to learn some further details of the fearful deed, the vague suspicion of which had so long clouded her existence. She shuddered as she hung over the man who had destroyed her mother ; but a feeling stronger still urged her to extend her own arm to sustain his drooping head, as she exclaimed :—

“ One word, Garroni; speak one word more—my wretched father, did he know?”

No answer was returned. Her strength failed to sustain the heavy weight which rested against her, and Garroni lay at her feet a rigid corse. Juliet stood beside him, almost as motionless and as cold. The dreadful disclosure of Garroni, though completely unexpected by Geraldine, whose suspicions had ever glanced towards him, was not so to Juliet; and she felt that she had herself been the means of leading the old man to make this awful atonement for his crime. The justice of the sequel could not efface its horror, and it was long ere she fully recovered from the shock.

In spite of the almost supernatural terrors in which they have dressed themselves, Inquisitors are men, and the scene that had just passed, made them feel they were so. The body of this miserable victim of bigotry was removed. The trembling women, whose presence had increased the horror of the disclosure, were then

led from the hall, and with the usual attention to secrecy, conveyed in closed litters to the palace of the Cardinal Romaldi, where they were met, and most kindly welcomed by his sister, the Abbess of St. Ildefonse. The person of Isidore had been secured before they left the hall; but it was long before they learned, to what fate he was reserved. In truth, nothing at that time so greatly encumbered and embarrassed the course of ecclesiastical justice, as any disclosure of flagrant crime within the sacred pale which guarded the dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church; nor was there any question which puzzled them so profoundly to decide, as to whether the mischief done to the holy cause of their religion by impugning one of her distinguished ministers, or that which might arise from the scandal of suffering a notorious crime to go unpunished, was the most to be deprecated. Isidore Bartone had for many weeks to endure all the complicated suffering of disappointment, imprisonment, and uncertainty, while this important question was debated in the conclave respecting

himself. It was, however, immediately decided upon, and that by the very highest authority, that he was no longer Abbot of St. Andrea's; to which important station the devout and gentle spirited Father Anselmo was raised, to the entire satisfaction of the whole community; nor was it long ere it was equally well understood, that no public or condign punishment would be inflicted on one, whose name had formerly been so favourably known in the catholic world. Whatever his fate might be, it was the intention of those by whom it was decided, that public scorn should make no part of it, and this intention was fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Oh ! 'tis the curse of love, and still approved,
When women cannot love, where they're beloved.

SHAKSPEARE.

A SCENE of life, most completely unlike any she had before witnessed, now broke upon Juliet. She had been hitherto known to as small a circle as was well possible for one in her rank of life. But now all Rome was talking of her. A veil of impenetrable mystery generally envelopes the proceedings of the holy office; and there is, perhaps, no great injustice in the belief, which has prevailed in all ages, and in all lands, that this arises from its acts being often such, as their agents would gladly hide from every eye.

This conclusion is by no means contradicted by the fact, that whenever any judgment of that awful tribunal bore marks of the justice and mercy which they assume as their motto, it was not only suffered to transpire, but the catholic world was made to ring with admiration and applause. Such was the case in respect to the honourable acquittal of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's from the charges brought against her; and the part which her young and beautiful niece had borne in this interesting drama, became the fashionable topic in every palace in Rome.

It is not improbable, that the striking circumstance of her having been proclaimed her father's heiress, by the voice whose accents were heard farther than any other in the world, contributed to the honours which now fell upon Juliet.

During the fortnight which, in courtesy and gratitude, the Abbess could not refuse to the hospitable importunity of her friends in Rome, her niece received no less than eight splendid proposals of marriage. It seemed that the en-

gagement she had proclaimed, was considered as broken off, by her subsequent dedication to the cloister; for there were not wanting, among those who heard her allude to this engagement, some powerful and venerable advocates for the youthful suitors who now sought her hand. Most of these proposals, indeed, were made by proxy, being ceremoniously transmitted by the relatives of the gentleman, to the illustrious aunt of the lady. But there was one among them who wooed in good earnest for himself; this was the young and handsome Marquis of St. Omeda, nephew to the Cardinal Romaldi, in whose palace Geraldine and her niece still continued to be guests. This circumstance not only gave him an opportunity for pleading himself his suit, in person, but of becoming very seriously interested in the success of it.

Morgante and Olive, who were both re-established in their places near the young heiress, were now for the first time made sensible of the importance attached to them; for the favour of both was propitiated by sundry tokens of gene-

rosity from her lovers; and Olive, in particular, was heard to declare, that one of the gay lackeys in the train of a Roman gentleman, was worth a dozen monks, of any description whatever, and well worth, at least, double that number of such false-hearted and traitorous priests, as the absconded Father Laurence.

Noble after noble continued to submit their proposals to the Abbess; noble after noble was rejected; but St. Omeda, though determined that every coming day should end his doubts, still lingered on, without declaring himself.

Juliet, who had conceived no very exalted idea of the disinterested nature of the attachment which her numerous lovers professed, from the circumstance of her expectations being regularly alluded to in every proposal, was disposed to treat the young Marquis of St. Omeda with particular distinction, solely because he had not proposed for her at all. She conversed with him without reserve; and her persuasion, that he was not one of those who had designs upon her father's estate, gave an ease and friend-

liness to her manner, which not only raised the young man's hopes, but made them every hour of more vital importance to his happiness. At length the time fixed for their departure drew nigh—one day only remained of their promised stay, and on that day St. Omeda resolved to know his fate. It was difficult to find a moment, in which the Abbess and her niece were not surrounded with company; but, on this last day, Morgante was bribed, more by the deep earnestness of the young man's request, than by the glittering present which accompanied it, to admit him to the private saloon appropriated to the Abbess and her niece, before the usual hour of their receiving company. Juliet was engaged at the moment he entered, in carefully arranging in a casket the trinkets she had purchased, by the direction of her father, for lady Claudia di Montecielo. Her aunt was standing by her, and listening with a smile to Juliet's earnest expressions of satisfaction in the hopes of the Count.

The quick eye of the lover was instantly

caught by the gems, part of which consisted of an ornament for the head, such as it was not the fashion for maidens to wear. His dark olive cheek blushed to scarlet, and he stood, uncertain whether to retreat, or to advance. Juliet greeted him with a cheerful frankness, which, if it did not banish his alarm, effectually prevented his giving evidence of it by flight; and he seated himself beside her, determined, ere he left the room, to hear from her own lips the destiny that awaited him. The Abbess retired to another apartment, for the purpose of making up a packet of letters for her convent; which, as she was about to accompany Juliet to Albano, were to be conveyed to Ancona by the Abbess of St. Ildefonse, who, like herself, had settled to leave Rome on the following day.

St. Omeda sat, for a moment, silently gazing at the occupation of Juliet, and then, taking a part of the jewellery in his hand, he said:—

“I am not, I believe, very skilful in ladies’ attire; but I had fancied such a tiara as this was worn only by married ladies.”

“ I believe you are very right,” replied Juliet, with a smile.

“ And when is it to grace the brows of lady Juliet d’Albano ?” said the young man gravely.

“ Never, my lord.”

“ Does that mean that you will never wear it ?” said he, with renewed animation ; “ or that you will only do so, when you cease to be lady Juliet d’Albano ?”

“ It means,” replied Juliet, laughing, “ that it was never intended for me at all.”

“ Thank Heaven !” he exclaimed fervently. “ You are, then, still free ?”

Juliet was both vexed and embarrassed. Nothing could be farther from her wish, than that her agreeable new friend should declare himself her lover.

“ What ! is he too hoping to catch the heiress ?” thought she with bitterness. “ All then are selfish and interested alike !”—Such were her thoughts, but she said nothing, till St. Omeda, encouraged by her silence, and the heightened colour of her cheek, ventured to seize her hand,

and exclaimed with all the ardour of genuine passion—

“ Oh, Juliet ! if this hand be free, bestow it upon me ! If your heart be again your own, let me win and wear it, as the dearest treasure earth or heaven could give me !”

Never was love offered, and answering love sought for in return, with more deep and unmixed sincerity than now ; but Juliet did not do her lover justice ; she imagined his proposal flowed from the same motive which, she could hardly doubt, had influenced others who had addressed her, and, both piqued at believing this, and vexed at her disappointment in the character of a man she had really esteemed, she answered almost petulantly—

“ Though these jewels, my lord, are not intended to decorate me, they are for one who, in becoming a bride, will render all suit to me as vain, as if they were for my own bridal ;—they are destined for the future wife of my father, my lord Marquis ; and when these are worn, I shall no longer be an heiress ——”

“And think you by that you will become less dear to me? Oh! know me better, Juliet,” said the young man earnestly. “I love you—nor could the gain or loss of the fairest and the broadest lands that ever dowered woman, either lessen or increase such love as mine!”

Juliet felt in an instant, that she had done him wrong; she coloured violently, and said, in a voice of much emotion—

“Forgive me, St. Omeda! It is not to you that I should testify the feelings, to which the addresses I have received since I have been at Rome, have given birth—believe me, I have always held you to be far unlike the rest; and I would have gladly left you with the persuasion, that all the kindness you have shown us, arose from the same disinterested friendship which we feel for you.”

“And must this exclude a warmer sentiment, lady Juliet? Will you for ever count it a mark of baseness to love you, because you have been proclaimed your father’s heiress?”

“Fortunately,” replied Juliet, carefully con-

tinuing her occupation, and securing the jewels from all chance of injury on their journey; “fortunately, the blunder, which has led to all this, cannot last long.—My father is on the eve of marriage with the young lady, for whom these trinkets are designed.”

“Thank Heaven for the news!” said the Marquis. “Now, at least, I may hope to be exempt from this degrading suspicion;—now, at least, you may believe it possible that you can be loved for yourself alone.—Juliet, let my life prove it to you——”

As Juliet had declared the chagrin, which she evidently felt at this declaration of love, arose from her general suspicion of the interested motives of all who addressed her, it might have been expected, that the proof of sincerity, now given by her lover, would have produced a different feeling; but, to the unspeakable mortification of St. Omeda, Juliet’s speaking countenance expressed even more vexation than before. Whether it would have soothed this mortification, to have known that it was her real and

sincere regard for him which occasioned this, may be doubted. Such, however, was assuredly the fact; and while something very like a frown contracted her smooth brow, her heart shrank from the painful task of telling him that she loved another.

It was at this moment, and before she had replied to his last words, that her aunt re-entered the room. Though certainly not deeply versed in scenes of love, Geraldine could not mistake the meaning of that, now before her.

The heightened colour, and discomposed look of Juliet; the eager and anxious eye of the young man, which was rivetted on her face; and the mute silence of both, were intelligible, even to a nun; and she was in the act of retiring again, when Juliet sprang towards her, saying—

“Do not leave me.—It is you must answer him—I cannot do it.”

These were not words to lead a lover to despair; and with renewed hope of winning all he wished, the Marquis rose, and respectfully

addressing the Abbess, begged to be permitted, through her, to repeat the offer he had just made of his hand and fortune to her niece. Geraldine had taken the extended hand of Juliet, when she had stepped forward to prevent her retreat, and still held it—but now Juliet sought to withdraw it, and make her escape.

“No, Juliet, you must not go,” said the Abbess. “The only proof of my true affection, that I can give you, is now and always to leave you mistress of yourself. I will not quit the room, since you wish me to remain in it, but it is you that must answer this proposal.”

“It is cruel to say so,” exclaimed Juliet, bursting into tears. “You know all—then why not spare me?”

“Go, then, my love,” said Geraldine;—“if, indeed, I do know all, I will spare you—and yet,” she continued, still holding her hand, “in such a case as this, there must be no mistakes, Juliet.—Do you wish me to tell the Marquis of St. Omeda, that you love another?”

“Yes,” said Juliet firmly, but at the same

moment covering her face with both her hands.

This was enough. Omeda waited to hear no commentary, but fled from the room, and from the house; and within an hour was on his road to join his regiment on the frontiers of Germany.

In the good old times of which I write, beautiful young ladies were so certain of meeting with abundance of lovers, that the incident just recounted would scarcely be worth recording, were it not for the proof it offered of Juliet's pertinacious adherence to the memory of an adventure, which must, by this time, almost have appeared to her like a dream, so completely had it passed away, leaving no trace but the fond idea which she still cherished at her heart.

The precipitate retreat of the young Marquis left the aunt and niece standing side by side, near a door opposite to the one by which he escaped; and so they continued for several minutes: the tears of Juliet still flowed, and she felt doubtful, if the frank avowal she had just uttered, might be fully approved by her aunt.

But when, at length, she raised her eyes to the dear face, in which she had learned to seek the reflection of all her own feelings, before she could be quite certain they were right, all her doubts vanished; for never did approval, pleasure, and affection, beam more brightly from any eyes, than from those with which Geraldine returned her glance. “And you really love him still, my Juliet?” she exclaimed in an accent of surprise and pleasure; “how benignly has Providence atoned for all the misery of my early life, by the happiness that seems opening before me!”

“And have you not forgotten this poor Hubert?” said Juliet, while love and hope again dimpled her soft cheek. “Why, then, you cruel aunt, why did you never name him?”

“Because I saw you surrounded by lovers—because flattery and adulation were besetting you on all sides—and it was not by my unfortunately uttering the name of Hubert in your ear, that I would have had his image recalled to your heart. If in truth you loved him, I knew

he would not want my voice to plead for him ; and if not, it were better that you should forget that you had ever seen him."

" Oh, my dear aunt !" said Juliet, " you know not what you have made me suffer by this proud care for Hubert's dignity—I know," she added, turning away her eyes, as if she would not suffer them to ask questions which she dared not allow her lips to speak—" I know there is some mysterious link between you, which may perhaps keep him, his conduct, and his intentions, for ever before your eyes—and as you ceased to name him to me, I thought that he had wished you should."

" My sweetest Juliet ! how can I ever pay you for all the perfect trust, the forbearing confidence you have shown me ? Not all you have done for me—and twice you have saved me from destruction—yet all this touches me not like your gentle submission to the secrecy I have imposed upon myself, on a subject that regards you so nearly."

" Should I love you as I do," replied Juliet,

“ if I could think, for a moment, that you would inflict this penance on me without necessity ?”

“ You do me justice, my best love,” said Geraldine, much affected both by her words and manner ; “ and yet, Juliet, I sometimes think, that in holding this mystery with you, I submit myself rather to the words of my promise, than to the spirit of it—I so long to tell you all ——”

“ No, no,” replied Juliet, playfully laying her hand upon the lips of Geraldine, “ you shall not tell me now—I have borne this mystery when fear and sorrow lay in every hour’s silence—but now I can well endure that it should last a little longer—for were we not to meet again, you would know it—and you would tell me so.”

“ You reason admirably, dearest ; and I will not press upon you a confidence, which truly I have no right to give—a few weeks, it may be a few days, will end your suspense ; and unless your father should be more vehement in opposition than I now expect, all will, I think, go smoothly.”

The remainder of the day was spent in speaking and receiving farewells—the highest and the holiest seemed to contend, as to who should show most honour and esteem to the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's; as for Juliet, not even the mortification which must have arisen, in many quarters, from her refusal of the alliances offered her, could prevent her winning beauty, grace, and sweetness, from leaving an impression in her favour, that was long remembered and acknowledged through the highest circles in Rome.

On the following morning they set forth for Albano, escorted by a numerous body of guards, evidently appointed by the authorities, as much for the purpose of testifying respect for the Abbess, as for ensuring her safety.

There was a healthy principle in Juliet's mind, which prevented any happy circumstance of her destiny to pass by her unheeded: the contrast between her present feelings, and those with which she had lately travelled the same road, embellished every league; and Morgante himself, bursting with glee as he was, while re-

membering all he had seen, and anticipating all the glory of recounting it, wore not a countenance of more gay and glowing happiness than Juliet. Geraldine, too, never felt more sensibly, than during this happy journey, that if her strange destiny had robbed her of much that was desirable, it had also left her much that was delightful. The honours she had received, however, certainly made no part of her happiness.

“Never,” said she, in answer to some remarks of Juliet’s,—“never do I feel so ill at ease with myself, as when this catholic applause is showered on me, and yet it is from no feeling that it is unmerited: I know I have done much towards turning evil into good. Years, aye, centuries must roll over the race of man, before they shall all learn what true religion means, before they shall all know that God did not make them what they are, that their restless spirits, their ardent enterprise, their fond affections, should all be crushed and buried within a cloister—but till they find this out, it is good to show them, that even in the way their ill-judged zeal would lead

us, there still may be kindness, peace, and purity.—This has been the object of my life, in the unnatural situation into which circumstances pushed me—and I have not failed in it—yet, dearest Juliet, the praise they give, wounds me more than it can please me.”

“I see not wherefore,” replied Juliet; “they praise you for your strict, yet gentle rule; they praise you for removing a reproach which struck the interests that they valued most; they praise you for proving to the world, that all the evil and disgrace, that is spoken of, in convents, is not the result of the institution, but of the faulty use of power in those that rule them,—why should praise so just as this, fail to give you pleasure?”

“Because, though they have known my acts, which have in truth been open to every eye—they know not me. I have seemed the thing I was not—and though my simulation has done harm to none—still it is hateful to myself.”

“I cannot understand this,” persisted Juliet, “you allow that your life has been one of active

usefulness, and of heart-felt piety—and yet you reproach yourself?”

“No, I do not reproach myself. It was to ensure the safety of my mother, that I first learnt to practise, with scrupulous exactness, the outward seeming of a catholic, while my heart worshipped in all the simple purity of Luther’s holy faith—it was only needful to continue this, when partly for my own, and partly for my poor father’s sake, I shrank from further struggle into the deep repose of the cloister. No—I cannot reproach myself; but yet, I for ever feel that I dislike myself,—that I am not what I would be, and that nature meant me for something nobler.”

“Then be that something, my beloved aunt,” cried Juliet warmly; “every motive has long ceased, which led you to embrace a life so discordant to your principles—leave it at once—resign your rule—and live for me !—”

The ardour with which she spoke, might have gone far towards persuading one who so dearly loved her, that what she said was “ wisest, best,”

even if every word she uttered had not echoed the exact feelings of the listener's heart. Geraldine answered with fervour equal to her own:—

“If such be your wish, my Juliet, such shall be the end of my eventful history—and I will see Sant' Catherina's no more.”

This conversation took place at one of the stations where they stopped for the night, on their journey towards Albano, and its effect upon Juliet was such, as to make her feel every circumstance not connected with her aunt, and with the years of happiness which she anticipated for them both, as almost too worthless to be remembered.

If Geraldine had ever doubted the strength of the attachment she had inspired in the warm-hearted and artless Juliet, the extreme delight she evinced at the prospect that now opened before her, must have sufficed to convince her of it. The idea of possessing her affection and society, unfettered by the hated restraint of the convent, inspired Juliet with a thousand plans for future enjoyment.

In the presence of Olive, who accompanied them in the litter, she could not openly discuss all the delightful schemes which the contemplation of the future suggested; but there was little need for her doing so in order to be understood by her friend—a word, a look, a slight caress, totally uncalled for by any thing that was passing, sufficiently explained to Geraldine, how her mind was occupied.

“Holy Mary!” exclaimed Olive; “how my lord the Count will storm, Signora, when he hears the history of our wicked Confessor! Whom do you think we shall have for our new Confessor, Signora?”

“It is quite impossible for me to tell you, Olive,” replied her mistress, adding, in an accent of most exhilarating happiness, “Oh, my dear, dear aunt!”

“Ah, very true,” resumed the waiting-woman, whom no feeling of deference could keep silent for half an hour together; “I do not wonder, Signora, that you are glad to hold the holy Abbess safe and sound in your arms again.

Ah, Signora, if I had not told you all, who knows what might have happened?"

Some happy thought floated along Juliet's imagination at this moment, and looking earnestly in the face of her aunt, she exclaimed, "For ever, and for ever!"

"Well! considering all things that have happened to you, Signora, it is no great wonder if you are almost out of your wits with joy; and to be sure you do look and speak rather wild, I think."

Notwithstanding that the happiness which lay in the heart of each, had made their journey delightful, Geraldine and her niece joyfully welcomed the first distant glimpse of the lofty towers of Albano; for both longed for more unrestrained conversation, than their present mode of travelling permitted.

The happy result of the accusation which had been so unadvisedly laid against the Abbess, was duly forwarded by an express to her brother, and both herself and Juliet were secretly expecting, with something like anticipated weariness,

ness, the long-winded and pompous exultation of the Count on the occasion. The day and very nearly the hour of their return had also been announced by a subsequent courier; and they were surprised on reaching the great gates of the castle, to find that they were not standing open to receive them.

The clamorous summons of the porter's bell, however, soon produced a sufficient degree of activity among the domestics to usher the ladies, with all due dignity, into the presence of their lord. He was seated in his library, and did not even rise from his chair at their approach. Juliet instantly perceived, that something had occurred to discompose him; but knowing by experience, that it was better on such occasions not to appear conscious of any manifestation of discontent, she inquired with much dutiful interest for his health.

“Where is Father Laurence?” was the reply.

“My dear father! Have you not received the dispatches which were forwarded to you

from Rome, the day my aunt was removed from the holy office?"

"Dispatches addressed to me, lady Juliet, are not likely to miscarry on the road."

"If you have received these, dear sir, you know as much concerning Father Laurence as we do; we have never heard of him since."

"I fear, Theodore," said the Abbess, kindly, "that you will miss the services of this unworthy man—and yet the duplicity of his conduct has been such, that it is difficult to regret his departure——."

"His departure is certainly not likely to cause you much disquietude, lady Geraldine.—Doubtless, you have your own reasons for what you do—though, as your convent is pretty nearly the richest in Italy, I see not what promotion you can either look for or desire."

A glance was exchanged between the sister and the daughter of the splenetic nobleman, which each interpreted into—"Never mind it—let us take no notice of his ill-humour:" and, accordingly, the two ladies seated themselves

near him, and endeavoured to lead the conversation to such topics, as must inevitably be interesting to him.

“ Our cousin, the Cardinal, inquired for you most kindly, Signor Padre,” said Juliet, with her sweetest smile.

“ And a friend more exalted still, Gregory himself, spoke often of you,” added the Abbess.

The Count d’Albano replied only by a groan.

“ I am sure, my dear father, that you are not well,” said Juliet, approaching him to take his hand.

“ How can any man be well,” replied the Count, holding his hand in such a position, as to make the performance of this little *agacerie* as difficult as possible ; “ how can any man be well, overwhelmed by sorrow and disgrace as I am ? The servant—the friend—the spiritual guide, of twenty years’ standing, driven away from me—and all my dearest hopes blasted by the disgraceful disclosure of—of—my sister’s—heresy.”

Juliet looked at her aunt in trembling, lest she should see again the high and haughty aspect,

which had heretofore so greatly pained her.— But no trace of such feelings was now visible. There was a slight smile, but it was more gay than scornful, as she said—

“ But the disclosure of this supposed heresy, dear Theodore, was so quickly followed by all the favour that the church could show, that the honour has surely well wiped out the disgrace.”

“ Too late !—too late !” replied the Count, with another groan ; “ the refusal of lady Claudia arrived before the news of your acquittal could be known to her.”

The mystery was now explained, and Juliet, at least, sympathised too sincerely in his disappointment, to feel the least inclination to make light of it.

Geraldine wisely withdrew, conscious that her presence could only irritate her brother, and Juliet then led him to speak at length of the refusal he had received, and the manner of it. She had now discovered the only effectual mode of removing his ill-humour. He talked to her

freely of his disappointment, and even condescended to show her the letter of the Duke di Montecielo.

By the perusal of this document, and the examination of its date, it became evident to Juliet, that the Count's age, and well-known ill-health, were the causes of this disappointment, and that it was written before the accusation against the Abbess could have been known. But she was careful not to point out either circumstance to the notice of her father; and with a sweet earnestness, which would have made an ordinary face look beautiful, she insisted upon the little importance which ought to be attached to one refusal, and that from the father of a girl who was not seventeen, when so many noble ladies might be found, who would doubtless receive his proposals with pleasure.

“ Were I you, my dear father,” said she, with cautious delicacy, “ I would address some lady who was sufficiently mistress of herself to answer according to her own wishes. The public honours which have lately been conferred upon my

aunt, must shed some eclat upon our whole family; and I think you could never propose your alliance to any noble house at a more propitious moment."

The most profound and artful politician could have suggested no train of argument better calculated to produce the effect desired, than the kind spirit of Juliet had imagined; Italian ladies of an age to dispose of themselves, being then, as now, less likely to be fastidious, than their ambitious friends might have been for them, some half score years before. It was, however, perfectly impossible for the Count d'Albano to conceive that HE could be refused by any one, from any defect in himself; the flattering part of Juliet's hint, therefore, was all that reached his apprehension, and he replied to it in a manner which plainly showed its good effects.

"You speak with wisdom beyond your years, lady Juliet; it is doubtless so. Jealousy and envy are for ever met by those whom nature and fortune have made pre-eminently great.

The duke may prefer a son-in-law less conspicuously his superior; and for some years to come, his daughter must, as you well observe, be submitted to his sway. There are others—yes, many others,—who, it can hardly be doubted, would receive such a proposal differently.”

Having brought her father to this improved state of mind, she sought her aunt, and found her wearing the same air of placid happiness, which she had watched with such delight upon the journey.

“Oh, how he frightened me!” exclaimed Juliet; “I hardly dared to look at you! What would have become of me, had I seen you again assume that look which seems to mark a magic circle round you, within which none must enter.”

“Ah, Juliet,” replied the Abbess laughing, “that magic circle has long lost all its power with you. I should really be at a loss to frame my features into a look that might awe your encroaching spirit; tell me, how could it be done?”

“You are wrong, quite wrong; most totally

mistaken, my aunt; time was, when though I hailed your smiles, I could endure your frowns; but now—oh, do not try me!—indeed I could not bear it.”

Notwithstanding the many sources of contentment, which tended to render this return to Albano pleasurable, both to the aunt and niece, there was still much anxiety that mixed with it. There was not then, as now, a little post-office at Torre Vecchia, where tidings might have been safely deposited of all who were dear, and all who were distant; and unless the woods could have spoken, they had no means of knowing whether the friend of whom both equally wished to hear, had sought for either of them within its shelter, during their absence.

Geraldine, indeed, suggested that it was possible Morgante might learn by going to the little sea-port, whether any vessel, such as he well knew how to describe, had touched there. But the autumn was now far advanced, and the short evenings gave little time for rambling after supper. This meal had been served shortly

after their arrival, and it was decided between them, that the inquiries they were so anxious to make, should be deferred till the morrow.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Here didst thou dwell, in this enchanted cover.

BYRON.

THE absence of Father Laurence had been supplied by the attendance of a priest from Santa Croce, at the matin and vesper services of the chapel; but the poor Count certainly felt his loss very severely. When his strange adventure at Rome became known, there were not wanting among the community at Santa Croce, some who would willingly have taken his place. But hitherto the Count had clung to the hope that his favourite might return; and the lurking consciousness which lay at the bottom of his heart, that both Father Laurence had an especial

gift for exculpating himself, and he one as efficacious for believing all he might say, left little doubt upon his mind, that if the good-hearted man would but show himself again, he should find no difficulty in reinstating him in his holy office. It was for this reason that no successor had been yet appointed; but the statement brought from Rome by the ladies, pretty well destroyed all expectation of seeing him again; and before the obsequious Father Paolo left the castle after vespers, his offers of domestic attendance were accepted. He had, however, some arrangement to make with the Prior, before he left his convent, and some other trifling affairs to settle, which made it convenient for him to delay entering upon his new office till the following week.

As soon as breakfast was ended on the following morning, the Count retired to his library to decide what address he should put upon his next proposal of marriage. Morgante tripped with a light foot, and a lighter heart, over the well-known hill, to Torre Vecchia, and Geraldine

and her niece wandered into the garden, and from thence down the steep bank, now stripped of all its gay blossoms, across the little mountain-stream, and up the opposite path that led to the long-forsaken chestnut tree.

They had set out to walk without any determinate object before them, and had pursued this path by tacit consent, and unconscious sympathy of feeling; but as they drew near to the spot which had been so interesting to both, Juliet exclaimed:—

“I wonder we should come here, dearest aunt. It is not wise; there is no point of all my ancient haunts, which I should visit with so little pleasure as the poor chestnut tree; let us go back.”

But they had already reached the boundary of the little wood, and ere they turned, the eyes of both took one glance towards the tree, the bank, the water, all so pregnant with sad and sweet remembrances.

“Who is that?” said Juliet, grasping the arm of her companion.

“Himself,” replied the Abbess, moving hastily forward; but in a moment she stopped, for Juliet was no longer by her side, and turning back, she saw the poor girl standing with her hands clasped, her head bent forward, and with that sort of wild examination, that seems to doubt if what it sees be real.

“Juliet! Juliet! this is sad weakness; come with me, dearest—it is himself, I tell you; she took her trembling arm as she spoke, and led her onward; but hardly had she quitted the covert of this wood, when their figures were perceived by the person they were approaching, and he sprang towards them with a fleetness which soon brought him to their side.

“Is it possible? may I believe my eyes—Juliet! Geraldine! am I indeed beside you both once more?—oh, I have suffered much.”

It needed not his assurance to tell them this, his countenance and person were most sadly changed; he was not only thinner and paler, than when they had parted from him three months before on the same spot, but the light

and laughing spirit had faded from his eye, and his voice no longer sounded like the echo of his joyous thoughts.

He had taken a hand of each, and for a moment led them in silence towards the turf seat he had quitted.

“Half an hour—ah, half that half, would have seen me leaving these shores for ever,” he said, drawing their hands together, and pressing them to his heart,—“how can it be, that I now see you here?”

“Because,” said the Abbess, who had more voice to speak than Juliet, “because we came hither to look for you; was it not here, Hubert, that I bade you come—and do you think I meant that none should meet you?”

“But none did meet me,” answered the young man, looking reproachfully at her.—“For weeks I have been lingering about in hope of seeing you, and long disbelieved the frightful tale that met me, Juliet, whenever I dared to ask for tidings of you.”

“What tale,” said Juliet; “what folly have you listened to?”

They were the first words she had spoken, and he stood still, as if he feared to lose them.

“Folly, Juliet? there was more of horror than of folly in it. I was told, and with such detail of fact and circumstance, that doubting would have seemed madness—I was told that you had already taken a religious habit at Ancona!” the young man gazed at her, as if he rather doubted the evidence of what he now saw, than of what he had then heard.

“Hubert,” said the Abbess gravely, “you have been to blame—did I not tell you, that Juliet should never be a nun?”

“Alas!” he replied, “my trust in you, which, when we parted, I believed should stand for ever, melted away before the feverish anxiety that consumed me, and left me so very very wretched, dearest Geraldine, that could you but guess what I have suffered, you would have no heart to blame.”

“ This has fallen out most untowardly, my dear Hubert,” replied the Abbess, “ for I have risked more than I ever did before, to write to you, that you might know exactly how it stood with Juliet. But know you,” she continued, while the colour of her cheek varied as she spoke, “ know you, Hubert, if your father has received a letter from me, by the hand of an Italian lady ?”

“ Not when I left him.”

“ And when was that ?”

“ At least six weeks ago.”

“ Alas, Camilla !” exclaimed the Abbess, while tears started to her eyes, “ she must have perished, Juliet.”

The young Hubert asked an explanation of the grief his words had occasioned ; and when he had received it, entered, in reply, into a narrative of all he had heard and suffered respecting the share which the Abbess was reported to have taken, in the unfortunate nun’s escape. “ Will you not both pity me,” he continued, with some renewal of his wonted gaiety,

“when you recall the state of mind in which you found me? Juliet, I entirely believed, was lost to me for ever—and I returned to Torre Vecchia this day—partly, perhaps, to indulge the foolish weakness of once more recalling her image, upon the spot where I had so often seen it,—and partly, to make one last effort to ascertain your fate, dear Geraldine, before I returned to my poor father, the most ill-omened messenger that ever crossed his threshold, with my own heart broken by the load of grief I carried to him.”

During this conversation, Juliet's eyes were fixed upon the speaker. They had reached the tree, and were all three seated upon the bank beneath it; Juliet was between them, and leaning her back against its stem, leaving her companions an opportunity of approaching each other to converse, which they did in a manner that enabled her to watch the countenances of both.

Hubert had scarcely uttered the last words, when she raised herself from her reclining pos-

ture, and taking a hand of each, exclaimed—
“ You have kept your secret long and well—so long, so well—that my heart has ached for it. I know you both were right, for *SHE* has *said it*.” And Juliet kissed the cheek of her aunt, to indicate who that she was, who never could be wrong. “ But as yet I cannot understand what danger could have betided either, had I long since known that Hubert was my cousin.”

Hubert imprinted innumerable kisses upon the hand that still clasped his, whilst Geraldine exclaimed, with a look of the most ineffable delight, “ And how do you know it now, my Juliet?”

“ Nay, rather ask me,” she replied, “ how it is possible I could have remained so long in doubt. I suppose I thought it sacrilege to look through any veil that you threw over me—but I never before had those two profiles so long before me, or I must have known it earlier. This is the reason, then, why you took my hand so strongly, Hubert, on the first day we met?

Was it not instinct, aunt, and natural affection, that led me to forgive him so easily?"

"But, Juliet," said the Abbess, "your proofs for this, are slighter than it were wise to take upon a matter of importance. You fancy that our noses are alike, and for that reason you would hail this young man as your near relative. Think you by this, to raise his opinion of your discretion, which you have so often told me he must think lightly of?"

"For that," said Juliet, blushing deeply, "I must take my chance; but not even you, can ever make me doubt again, that Hubert is my cousin."

"Beloved Juliet," said the young man, dropping on his knees before her, "will you not bless, with me, the tie that, though you knew it not, first brought me near you."

"There may be some Father Dominic in the wood, watching his prostration, aunt; you had better not let him kneel so near you."

Though Hubert did not comprehend the allusion, he thought not at that moment of seeking

any interpretation of it ; but resisting the effort of her little hand to raise him, he said :—

“ You take me willingly, I see, for your kinsman, but this will not content me ; tell me, tell me, dearest and best, may I hope to see this tie forgotten in one a thousand times more dear—Will Juliet d’Albano be the wife of Lord Hubert of Arlborough ?”

“ There may be some mystery in the matter yet,” said Juliet, turning from him, and hiding her blushing face upon the shoulder of her aunt. “ Has he a right, my aunt, to speak what now he has said,” she continued, “ without leave asked of those who are far away ?”

“ And wherefore did I tear myself from you ?” said Lord Hubert, “ without daring even to breathe my name into your ear—without daring to claim the dear right of calling you my cousin, but because I would submit myself in duty to my noble father—Juliet I came here as his messenger to lead his affianced daughter to England.”

“ And my father ?” whispered Juliet.

“His pleasure has been cared for, my sweet cousin.”

“All things went well for us in England,” he continued, addressing himself now to Geraldine, but still kneeling at the feet of Juliet, and retaining her hand in his: “I come in triumph—yet but for this blessed meeting I should have returned in bitterest despair: all things go so well in England; the arrears are greater than my father thought them—my aunt’s portion will exceed ten thousand pounds.”

“That will make all things easy—but Hubert, has he removed the interdict? may you enter Albano ——?”

“I tell you what, good people,” said Juliet rising and speaking with affected peevishness—“excuse me, my good aunt, and you, my new found cousin—but if I am never to know any thing about you, but what my own sharp wit shall teach me, I give you notice that I shall leave you greatly to yourselves—I and Morgante will range the hills, and amuse ourselves with plucking such flowers as the season has left

us—while you both sit together, conferring on affairs too mighty for my capacity.”

“How well she knows her power, dear Geraldine ;” said Lord Hubert rising, and preventing the flight she threatened, by throwing his arm round her.

“We have no secrets now, my Juliet—at least from you, and to prove this—sit down and question me—exert your skill to ask me all that you most wish to know, and if I but pause, hesitate, or demur one single moment, to tell you what you ask, then banish me, and swear never to see me more.”

“It is a tempting challenge, cousin Hubert,” replied Juliet smiling.

“My Abbess, and my aunt,—may I accept it?”

“Most surely may you,” replied Geraldine, “and if he leave one doubt unsatisfied, I undertake to prompt him faithfully ; now then begin your catechism.”

Juliet re-seated herself between them, and in an accent of playful formality, but with

feelings of the most serious interest at her heart, she began to question him :—

“ Why, my Lord Hubert, did you so strenuously refuse to enter the castle of your near relative the Count d’ Albano ? ”

Lord Hubert looked in the face of the Abbess, as if hesitating how to answer.

“ You have begun with a painful question, my dear child,” said Geraldine gravely. “ Is it your wish to have it frankly answered ? ”

“ Perhaps not,” said Juliet, with a sigh—
“ But tell me, why you came to Albano at all ? Why you waited for hours, as you said, to see me in the wood ? and above all, why you so pertinaciously refused to communicate to me your name ? ”

“ Were you to put one question to me at a time,” said Lord Hubert laughing, “ I should have a better chance of doing myself honour by the perspicuity of my replies ; however, I will do my best : first, then, my most dear cousin, I came to Albano to gratify a wish, strong in my father, but stronger still in me, to learn every

particular that the place of her residence could furnish, of a relative whose fate has long thrown a shade over our house. It would be difficult, Juliet, to make you conceive the deep interest which the memory of my unfortunate aunt has left among us—the remembrance of her—young, lovely, good, and gracious, as the day she left them, yet lives in the hearts of many—and even the young, who knew her not themselves, still make her history the theme of their saddest story, and most plaintive song.”

“How were her sufferings so well known among you?” inquired Juliet.

“The full answer to that question, my dear cousin, you shall receive when you are among us—the journal of her sad life, from the hour she left her native land, to the day before she died, is in the hands of my father. It is probable that it was never intended to meet the eyes of the family she had left. So gentle a being would hardly have prepared such misery for those she loved. It is the very transcript of her heart, and all its sorrows, and seldom has one so

young, so innocent, and so lovely, suffered as she did."

Juliet turned to her aunt, and saw that her eyes were swimming in tears.

"I am much to blame!" she exclaimed.—"To gratify my selfish curiosity, I am paining you."

"No, no; let him speak on, Juliet; I love to hear him," replied the Abbess. "That journal I have never read.—I knew she had written much; and when she was no more, my first care was to conceal her papers from the eyes of Isidore. I immediately made a packet of the whole, and gave it in charge to a woman I knew well at Torre Vecchia, with instructions to keep it carefully, till she should find an opportunity, among the many sailors of the place, to forward it to my uncle's address in England. This, it seems, she succeeded in doing, within a year after the death of my dear mother:—and it is this journal which has kept alive, in those who knew her, and awakened in those who did not, that tender interest which brought Hubert from Germany, to the spot on which she perished."

“I wonder not that he should feel such interest,” said Juliet; “yet still I do not fully understand why he lay waiting for me in the wood, being so determined to shun all intercourse with my father.”

“Your father’s feelings towards his mother, Juliet, as well as the devotion of my cousin Geraldine, formed by no means the least moving part of the history that journal gave us.—My father is warm in temper, and vehement in feeling. He charged me, as I valued his blessing, never to pass the threshold of the Count d’Albano; but to see you, Juliet, and, if possible, your little brother too, was part of my commission.”

“And was it also part of your commission to hide your name, and—and—”

“And ask you to become his wife, Juliet? Is not that what you would say?—Why, no.—I rather believe that in the last particular he went beyond the letter of his instructions.”

“As to the concealment of my name,” resumed Lord Hubert, “it was not only essential

to my safety in this country, (for this consideration alone would, perhaps, hardly have sufficed to enable me to resist your importunity,) but when I left my father, he granted the permission I asked, to seek an interview with my cousin Geraldine, on the condition that I pledged my word to him not to avow my name to any one in Italy, except herself, and to bind her, by all her love and duty to him, to preserve my secret. Nor was his precaution any way unreasonable. I was about to visit Germany, charged by our Queen to convey to her agent there a subsidy for the suffering Hugonots in France, which the policy of her cabinet would not permit them to transmit openly. To be identified as the doer of such an errand, in the state of the church, might have caused my career to end somewhat abruptly."

Juliet remained silent for a moment after he ceased speaking, and then turning to the Abbess, said, in an accent of reproach:—

"It was not to see me, then, that you came to Albano?—It was to meet Lord Hubert."

“You are right, Juliet; but you must settle the matter of precedence between you as you can. He certainly was my first object, but you speedily contrived to thrust yourself into his place; for the which injury, you must atone to him as well as you can.—And now, Juliet, I suppose you are tired of asking questions, or you might be tempted to inquire what that packet contained, which you saw Morgante deliver to Lord Hubert; and might also feel some curiosity to know wherefore our young cousin is returned.—Think you that the Queen has already sent another subsidy?”

The cheeks of Juliet glowed, and her heart beat strangely; but her eyes were fixed upon the ground, and she answered nothing.

“Juliet,” said the young man, again taking the hand that had escaped from his, “may your cousin Hubert claim the love that you vowed to guard for ever for the stranger? Does the knowledge of my name lessen the hopes I have lived upon?”

“How strange, how wild, must I have ap-

peared to you, my lord!" she replied, with painful emotion. "Good heavens!" she continued, "is it possible that the six short months which have elapsed since first we met beneath this tree, can have so completely changed me!"

"Changed you, Juliet!—Are you, then, changed, and has all the delight of the last hour been granted me, only to make me feel the misery of losing you more bitter?"

"Just now, Juliet," said the Abbess, rising, "you threatened to run away, and leave Hubert and me to settle our affairs together. This is not a bad plan, when a thorough understanding between two people is really necessary; and therefore I shall adopt it, advising you, before I go, to make your cousin clearly understand how much you are changed, and how much you are the same. My turn shall come next; for I, too, have some changes to communicate, of which, observe, he as yet knows nothing."

So saying, she walked back towards the wood; Lord Hubert thinking that her proposal was a

wise one, and Juliet being far too earnestly engaged in pulling to pieces the last honeysuckle of the year, to be able to prevent her.

There are secrets, which, in my opinion, ought to be held sacred even by the pen of the historian; and to recount every impassioned word, look, and action, of two lovers who had been separated under circumstances of so much doubt and dread, and were now re-united, with so much to license the full avowal of all their feelings, would be scarcely fair.

Thus much, however, may be recorded, without indiscretion. Lord Hubert assured her that he now came to ask her hand in marriage, with the full consent and approbation of his father. He told her, too, that he brought with him arguments, which his cousin Geraldine thought would prove extremely powerful towards convincing the Count d'Albano, that his wisest course would be to consent likewise. He did not very fully explain himself on the nature of these, but referred her to the Abbess for particulars. Altogether the interview was extremely

satisfactory to both parties; and whatever were the changes which Juliet persisted to declare had taken place in her, Lord Hubert ceased to quarrel with them.

The heavy bell of the castle announced the important hour of noon, while they were still seated side by side, beneath the chestnut tree; but though Juliet rose, with dutiful alacrity, to hasten home, that her father might not be displeased, by missing her in her place at dinner, it was no longer with the breathless terror of former days; and in this, as well as in much else, the change to which she had alluded, was proved not to be imaginary.

Exactly at the point where the little rustic bridge crossed the stream, Juliet met her aunt, who had been indulging in a solitary ramble to the rock, under whose shelter she had related to her the history of her early life. Neither spoke of the manner in which the last hour had been passed by them, and which, in truth, was as widely different as it is well possible for imagination to paint; but, arm in arm, they mounted

the bank together, and walked nearly in silence through the garden to the castle.

During their absence, the Count d'Albano too had met with an adventure, which had caused him a surprise, almost as agreeable as that which they had experienced, by meeting Lord Hubert, of Arlborough, in the wood.

It has been stated, that the Count retired to his library, for the purpose of meditating on the various ladies with whom he could be best pleased to commence life anew; and he had come to the point which left two balancing in his mind with a painful degree of equality, when the door of the room was opened, with that stealthy stillness which indicates a fear of intrusion in the party approaching; slowly and timidly it was pushed inward, sufficiently to admit to view the figure of a monk, completely enveloped in his cassock and his cowl. This dress was sufficient, at all times, to ensure a certain degree of welcome from the catholic Count d'Albano; on this occasion he testified neither surprise nor displeasure, but sat patiently

waiting for his visitor to declare the object of his coming. With a pace, which resembled the approach of a cat, infinitely more than the movement of any other creature, the timid monk continued to advance, and, when at the distance of about three feet, he dropped on his knees before the Count, and uttered, in a feeble whine, of most touching humility, “My lord and master ! my lord and master !”

The Count rose from his chair, and advancing his arms with an action very nearly involuntary, almost embraced the kneeling friar, exclaiming at the same time, “Father Laurence ! oh, Father Laurence !”

“My son ! my son !” was the touching rejoinder, “let not evil report send me from thee, my son. I am a weak, an erring, a deceived old man ; but doubt not the true devotion of thy faithful Confessor !”

While these words were spoken, the Count so far recovered his surprise, as to be conscious that some degree of resentment was necessary towards the man, who had unquestionably plotted against his holy sister ; but his memory was

neither active nor accurate in recalling the precise faults of which he had been guilty, and he remembered but too well all the suffering he had endured from the want of his ever-ready, and ever-soothing counsels.

“Nay, Father Laurence,” said the perplexed nobleman, “how is it that you have behaved thus—fie, fie, fie—my sister is my sister after all, and did you not know, Father Laurence, how much I wanted you—fie, fie, fie.”

“My noble patron,” sobbed forth the penitent monk, still on his knees before the Count’s chair, “you know not the temptations that beset me. I ever thought of your glory, beyond all else, and deemed that my duty was to shield you from the suspicion which such stories as I heard seemed likely to bring upon all your race. The mode of doing so, which appeared to me the most eligible, was, that your own confidential friend and Confessor, your own devoted Father Laurence, should appear against her; this was my motive, my son—my only motive—now drive me from you—if you have the heart to do it!”

As he spoke these heart-moving words, he leaned forward, and embraced the knees of his relenting patron.

“ But the Abbess is here, Father Laurence ; what will she say at seeing you return after what has passed ? ”

“ Nothing, my beloved son. Nothing in the world will she say, if you think fit to admit me ; —she may, it is likely, smile in her cold proud way ; but is it the seventh Count d’Albano, who will banish his truest friend for fear of a woman’s smile ? and do you not want me, my son ? who is there to write your letters ? who is there to spice your cordial ? who is there to pray for you ? who is there to bless you—and I will bless you, my dear son : drive me not from you —drive me not from you—at least do it not, till you have found one who can supply my place near you.”

“ As for that, Father Laurence,” replied the Count, “ Father Paolo is engaged to begin his residence here next Monday.”

“ Now all the holy martyrs in heaven forbid ! ”

said the Confessor, rising from his knees with some difficulty, “why, my son, he will make a fable of every thing that is done and said in the castle, from the first hour he enters it. Oh ! it is a false heart that Father Paolo’s,—the saints in bliss forbid that I should ever live to see him in the place that I have filled within this noble castle. He will sneer and scoff, I know he will scoff.”

“Scoff, Father Laurence ? he dare not do it.”

“Nay, my dear son, he knows your piety ; he knows—none better than himself—that not even your valour will ever make you forget your reverence for things holy. His cowl will let him scorn you as he will.”

“Scorn me, Father Laurence ?”

“Forgive the word, my son. I know the man. Should he suspect that you are less wealthy than the Count of Marno, or the Duke of ——.”

“How shall I rid me of him ?” interrupted the Count passionately. “He shall not enter here, if I go unshriven to the day of doom.”

“Speak but the word, my son,” said Father Laurence, approaching gently to the table, on which were placed all the implements of writing. “Let me but know it is your pleasure, and I will let him understand, and without an hour’s delay, that Father Laurence is in his former stall again, and means to hold it.”

“Then do it, in God’s name,” said the Count impatiently. “None such as he shall enter here, come what may.”

Without pausing for further instructions, Father Laurence immediately wrote and dispatched the following epistle:—

“HOLY AND WELL-BELOVED BROTHER,

“The evil accidents which, for many days, prevented my return from Rome, have yielded at length to my earnest prayers; and power has been granted me to reach once more the spot, where, for so long a period, I have been appointed to exercise my holy calling—the Virgin Mother—the holy angels—the saints—the martyrs, all have heard my prayers, and

granted my desire. I am again restored to my beloved patron, and to my duties near him. It is by his order that I now write this notice to you, holy brother, in order that, knowing the situation to be no longer vacant, you may proceed no farther in your preparations for taking the part of domestic Confessor in the Castle d'Albano. Health and godliness be with you, and farewell."

As soon as the letter was finished, Father Laurence read it aloud to the Count, whose only remark upon it was:—

"Well, well—let it go—any thing is better than living in the way I have done, since you left me. Let it go."

In less than three minutes afterwards the letter was advancing at a hand gallop towards the convent of Santa Croce, safely lodged in the pouch of Riccardo. As soon as he had seen it fairly on horseback, the Confessor returned to his patron, and instantly set about making the blessing of his return perceptible, by the per-

formance of sundry little offices, which he knew must have been missed during his absence. He opened, shook, and dusted the huge roll of the Albano pedigree, sighing very audibly, as he removed the cobwebs that marked the neglect into which it had fallen. Then he approached, with gentle step, to the deep bergere, which had the honour of sustaining the person of the Count, and drawing away the cushion that supported his back, he set to thumping and shaking it, till he had made it as plump and smooth-looking as his own benign countenance—softly dropping it behind his patron when he had finished the operation, with the gingerly caution of a child playing at spillikins. He next turned to examine the stand near the door, which was wont to contain a constant supply of holy water; and again a deep sigh heaved his bosom—it was empty. Judiciously refraining from any remark which might tend to wound his patron, without increasing the happy consciousness of his own return, the Confessor silently took the vase from its stand, and leaving the room for a

few minutes, returned with it replenished; then approaching the Count, with a mingled air of reverence and affection, he sprinkled his dress, his table, his chair, and his foot-stool. It was very evident that the object of all this zealous care was fully sensible of it, and exceedingly well pleased to see himself once more attended to as he ought to be; yet still there were some slight symptoms of anxiety in his manner.

“But the Abbess, Father Laurence; what shall we say to her? You surely must have some reasons to offer for what has happened.”

“Reasons, my son? Never doubt it. My reasons are such as the Pope himself could hardly refuse to receive. What did I, but listen to the instructions of one of my own order, who was placed in a situation of high authority? Would you have had me give the Abbot of St. Andrea’s the lie? Trouble not yourself for this, my son; I fear not the holy lady’s resentment.”

“But at dinner, holy Father?—It wants not

many minutes of noon—what is your plan? How shall you present yourself?”

“ Even in my old place, my son; and when they hear me bless the meat, they will hardly quarrel with it for my sake.”

Almost as he spoke, the great bell sounded the hour of dinner; the priest and his noble penitent walked side by side into the hall, and had already been some minutes in their places, when the Abbess and Juliet entered.

Conscious of being late, they approached the table with more haste than usual, and were sliding with all celerity into their places, without looking round to see who were, or who were not, at the board, when the deep full voice of Father Laurence pronounced aloud the Latin grace, with which for so many years he had been used to consecrate all viands eaten in the castle of Albano. Both ladies started at the sound; and by common consent first looked towards the Confessor, and then at each other. There was something in the sly conscious look of Father

Laurence, which produced in both a most indecorous inclination to laugh; and when their eyes met, not all their indignation against him could prevent their suffering this inclination to appear. It is probable that the pompous Count would have preferred almost any other indication of their feelings; and they both knew him so well, that they read aright the heightened colour which it produced. More, therefore, for the purpose of treating the business in the manner least displeasing to him, than from feeling any thing beyond the most profound contempt for his favourite, the Abbess assumed an air of stately displeasure towards him, which she, however, softened, greatly to her brother's satisfaction, upon his mumbling some apology for having been so grossly deceived.

The increased importance which Juliet had of late acquired in the mind of her father,—first from his having considered her as his heiress; and, secondly, from the pains she had taken to show him how he might prevent her being so,—induced him to address some slight words of

apology to her, after dinner was ended, concerning the easy pardon he had accorded to his favourite.

“ You, my dear Juliet,” said he, “ will, I feel certain, agree with me, not only in the justice of forgiving an error, which proceeded only from mistake ; but in the immense importance, at this moment, of recalling near me the only man existing perfectly competent to understand my wishes and their motives ; and, therefore, the only one capable of filling the place of secretary to me.”

Juliet assured him, and very truly, that the satisfaction of seeing him again attended by a person whose services were so acceptable to him, greatly overbalanced any feeling of anger to which the conduct of Father Laurence might have given rise.

“ God grant, my dearest father,” she continued, “ that he may be as efficiently useful to you as formerly ; and that the interesting letter it will soon, I hope, be his office to write, may receive such an answer as we desire.”

“Amen! Lady Juliet—Amen!” replied the Count fervently. “But it is not only in the writing the letter of which you speak, that I shall require his services. Father Laurence is a shrewd man, Juliet; he knows as much, or more, perhaps, of all the noble families for twenty miles round than any other. He will tell you their rent-roll and their pedigree in a manner that would surprise you. He is, in truth, a very able man, and one whom, spite of the accident which has happened, I greatly value.”

“Have you decided, my dear father, to whom you will do the honour of offering your name and rank?”

The Count did not answer immediately, and looked so exceedingly solemn, that Juliet feared her question had been abrupt.

“Forgive me, my dear sir,” she added; “if my importunity is troublesome; but I most earnestly wish that I could hear of this affair, which I have so much at heart, being in a good train before I again leave you. I think not

that my aunt can remain much longer at Albano."

"I suppose not—I suppose not, Juliet. Yet do not fear that I should leave you in suspense; you have sufficiently proved to me that your anxiety for the continuance of your noble race, is such as deserves the most respectful attention from the head of it; and, young as you are, an express shall wait upon you at Sant' Catherina's, as soon as possible after this important business is definitively settled."

"Respecting Sant' Catherina's, my dear father," replied Juliet, colouring deeply, "I believe my aunt would wish to converse with you. I know that at present she is engaged in her own room, by a letter that she is anxious to finish; but if you could conveniently afford her half an hour, I think she would be glad to be admitted to you."

"Is it respecting your renewed vocation, lady Juliet? Surely, neither my sister, nor yourself, can doubt my perfect willingness to accede to your pious wish in this matter?"

“ My aunt, dear sir,” replied Juliet, considerably embarrassed, “ will herself explain, much better than I can do, the reasons for her wishing to consult you. May I,” she continued, rising to leave the room, “ may I inform her, sir, that you will see her alone in your library ?”

The Count d’Albano took no peculiar pleasure in tête-à-tête conversations with the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s; but he saw no mode of avoiding that which was now proposed to him. He was, moreover, in a state much nearer approaching to good-humour than usual, and therefore replied, with a very tolerable attempt at graciousness, that he should be very happy to see her.

Juliet hastened immediately to her aunt.—
“ You come in good time, my dear child; I have this moment finished my letter to my poor nuns; but I will not dispatch it, till every thing shall be satisfactorily settled with your father. Do not look so anxious, dearest Juliet; though our path may not be perfectly smooth before us, I see no obstacle beyond our powers to remove. What is it you fear, dearest ?”

“Not the final result,” replied Juliet; “I know, full well, that you have wherewithal to remove greater obstacles than any I foresee; but I cannot help feeling great anxiety for the manner in which my father shall receive Lord Hubert’s offer to visit him. So much strong averseness must have been conquered for my sake, before this offer of a visit could have been made, that if it be not graciously accepted——”

“Fear nothing, Juliet; Lord Hubert shall sup with us to-night, and your father shall receive him as you would wish. That he shall conceive as strong a friendship for him as I have done—or even as that which you feel yourself,—I will not undertake to promise, but he shall be welcomed as a noble and well-esteemed cousin—will that content you?”

“Completely!” replied Juliet. “Manage but this for me, and it shall be long ere you complain of my looking anxious again.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Bell, book, and candle, shall not drive mē back,
When gold and silver beck me to come on.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN lady Geraldine entered her brother's library, she found Father Laurence sitting beside him, listening, with the most unshrinking patience, to the recapitulation of all he had before heard, on the subject of his patron's intended espousals, at the time that lady Claudia di Montecielo was the object of his vows.

Geraldine paused at the door. "You are, perhaps, engaged on business, my lord?" said she. "If so, let me know when you are at leisure, and I will return."

“By no means, by no means, sister Geraldine, shall your business yield to mine. It is true we are speaking of business of as high, or perhaps I may be permitted to say, of higher importance than any other; nevertheless, it shall be postponed. Leave us, holy Father,” he continued, turning to Father Laurence; “weigh well what I have said to you, and when the holy Abbess leaves me, I will again summon you to my councils.”

The monk bowed profoundly to the noble brother and sister, and left the room with no lingering step.

In the age of which I write, very important events might occur, and be canvassed in many circles at Rome, which might fade away and be forgotten before they could travel into the provinces; or if they reached them at all, it was so laggingly as to present, perhaps, a stronger contrast between past and present times, than can be found in any other circumstance. Thus it happened, that no syllable respecting the frightful disclosure of the crime of Isidore, which, though

it took place within the walls of the Inquisition, had been spoken of with very little reserve by the friends of the Abbess of Sant' Catherina's at Rome, had yet reached the Count d'Albano.

There were many feelings which prevented either lady Geraldine or her niece from touching on this dreadful topic, in writing or conversing with him; but there were now many powerful reasons for informing him of what had been so unexpectedly discovered; and though shrinking from the task she had to perform, Geraldine was herself determined to acquaint her brother with the whole. In doing this, she cautiously avoided dwelling upon any point that might awaken her tenderer feelings. It was not in the presence of the Count, that she could find consolation in weeping over the memory of her mother. She made the dreadful narrative as short as possible, and her courage sustained her through it without a tear.

The Count listened to her, certainly not without emotion; but it was rather that of terror than of sorrow. So fearfully distorted was his

mind on the subject of his mother, that it seemed as if not even the evidence of her murder could inspire him with any human feeling respecting her; nor was it till his sister had repeated the expression of horror and indignation used against Isidore, by one whose words appeared to the Count as little differing from the voice of Heaven, that he uttered—

“ It was a dreadful crime.”

“ It was a crime so dreadful,” said his sister, “ that the land wherein it has been committed, has become hateful to me—I will abide in it no longer.”

“ What do you mean, sister Geraldine?” said the astonished Count:—“ Is it your purpose to change your convent? And will all your interest at Rome, think you, obtain for you another appointment equal to that you would abandon?”

“ I have no such object,—no such wish, my lord; I have laboured for many years to be an instrument of good towards those whom I was appointed to govern; but I have endured too much to continue in a station of so much fatigue

and responsibility; and when I leave it, I trust that it will be held by one, whose spirit has not been wounded as mine has been."

"And Juliet, sister Geraldine? What is to become of her? Of course you know that it is by her own earnest wish she is now to return to the cloister?"

"I think, brother, you have in some degree misunderstood my niece. It has been, and is, her generous, and most earnest desire to see you married again. You can hardly wish for a male heir more sincerely than Juliet wishes to see you the father of one. But it follows not from this, that she should pass her days in a cloister."

The Count's eye-brows rose to the top of his forehead, and he coloured highly.

"It seems, then, that I have not only misunderstood her, but that both she and you, holy mother, have most strangely misunderstood me. Have I not told you—but perhaps I have not—but the truth—but the truth is, sister Geraldine, that unless Juliet be provided for in the manner

your generosity proposed at the time she entered your convent, I shall not have the means of forming this marriage, which she professes so ardently to desire."

"She does more than profess, brother; she does desire it; and is now about to give a proof of her sincerity, that I think you will feel to be strong indeed. Juliet is not ignorant that your expenses have exceeded your means, and it is her first wish to relieve the embarrassments which have ensued from this."

"And how can she do this, sister Geraldine? How can she, in the name of all the saints, help in the slightest degree to do this, except by becoming a nun in a convent where no pension is required with her?"

"I am well aware, my dear brother, that it must appear to you impossible for poor Juliet to possess any such power; but if I should make it appear to you that she really has it, or at least that all which is wanting to her possessing it, is your consent to her accompanying me in my voluntary exile, instead of remaining to

enter an Italian convent; if this be proved to you, Theodore, would you refuse your consent to her doing so?"

"I know not what you mean, sister Geraldine; but of this I am quite sure, that Juliet may travel with you to Jerusalem without finding the means of redeeming the rich farm that I mortgaged last year to the Prior of Santa Croce, or even of paying the tailor for the suits of my serving men, or the saddler for the caparisons of their horses."

"It is natural that you should think so, Theodore, but nevertheless it is possible that you may be mistaken."

"Explain yourself, in the name of Heaven, sister; in truth, I like not these riddles."

"I will explain every thing to you, Theodore;—but it is surely not unreasonable, that before Juliet should pledge herself to make the noble sacrifice she meditates, she should receive your assurance, that in return you will give her permission to dispose of herself as she likes—provided always, that it be in such a manner as

I—to whose care you have already consigned her—shall approve.”

“Nor shall I scruple to comply with such a condition. Juliet is a discreet young woman; she has wisdom beyond her years, and has already proved herself to have so just a sense of the honour and advantage of her family, that I have little reason to fear she should do aught that would offend me.”

“Your confidence in her is no more than she merits, brother. The case is this. Our maternal grandfather received a grant, some forty years ago, or more, from Henry the Eighth of England, of the rich abbey lands of Emersby. It was one of the endowments, which, in his anger at the resistance of those who enjoyed them, he caused to be forfeited: for several years the revenues of these lands were enjoyed by Lord Arlborough; but on the death of King Henry, and during the reign of his daughter Mary, his right to them was disputed by the former occupants, his steward and tenants were thrust out, the monks of Emersby were again collected

within the shelter of its abbey, and again enjoyed the revenue of its lands. Our grandfather, however, still retained the grant made out to him by the order of King Henry; and after Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, she not only confirmed it, but took effectual measures to have it carried into effect.

“This, however, was not achieved without some difficulty. The present Queen, they say, loves not, like her imperious father, to enforce her will by the bared right hand of power.—It is her pleasure to work by the law, and with the law, and many years have been consumed in adjusting the claims of the different parties. The whole question has recently been decided in favour of our uncle, and a very large sum of arrears has been awarded to him.—With that generous liberality, which I hear has ever been a remarkable feature in his character, he immediately declared, that he considered the descendants of his sister, as having a right to share in the large sum thus recovered; but on applying to an eminent lawyer on the subject, and

requiring his professional services for the purposes of dividing and conveying it, he was told, that this idea of a right on the part of his sister's children was altogether unfounded, and that her portion, paid at the time of her marriage, cleared the family property of all claim from her. Yet, still our generous uncle was not satisfied, but determined to bestow, as a free gift, one half of the sum thus recovered, upon myself and your daughter Juliet, in equal portions."

To the whole of this discourse, the Count d'Albano listened with extreme attention, which appeared to call almost painfully upon his powers of hearing and comprehending; but at the last words, the whole truth seemed to rush upon him at once, and he exclaimed:—

"An heiress! an heiress in her own right?—she wishes to relieve me? may the virgin queen of heaven bless her for it;—she is indeed a good and pious child, and worthy of her father's noble name,—but sister—sister Geraldine, let me understand you fully. Is it Juliet's filial purpose to endow me with her wealth?"

The epithets of “selfish,” “unnatural,” passed through the mind of Geraldine; but she spoke them not, even with her eyes, and answered his eager question by saying:—

“Such is her purpose, Theodore; and all she asks in return, is freedom to follow me whithersoever I may go.”

“Assuredly! beyond all question. What think you may be the amount? It is a blessed chance. Surely Juliet shall go with you, sister, and I cannot doubt your generous care of her. This will make a difference; lady Cordelia is scarcely young enough. By your leave, sister, I must seek my Confessor——Yet, stay; how did these tidings reach you?—may they, in truth, be trusted?”

“Doubt it not; I pledge my word on the accuracy of what I have now told you. But you inquire for the messenger; and it is, indeed, of him I wish to speak. I trust, brother, that you will receive him nobly, seeing that he is no other than Lord Hubert, of Arlborough, the only son of our benefactor, and near of kin to our blood;

—he awaits your pleasure at Torre Vecchia.”

There was an awkward sort of twitching, either at the seat of pride, or the seat of conscience, within the Count, at hearing this; but he was far from feeling a moment's doubt as to the course he should pursue.

“I will send instantly to Torre Vecchia to invite him, sister Geraldine; nay, I would willingly go myself; but perhaps his reception will be more becoming his dignity, as well as my own, if I remain within my paternal halls to welcome him. What think you, sister Geraldine?”

“I am decidedly of your opinion, my Lord. Let my niece's little page, Morgante, bear your message to him; and I doubt not he will come hither immediately.”

The Count instantly summoned the boy to his presence, and in the same breath desired that the lady Juliet also might attend him. The command reached them together. Juliet was in the very act of telling her petted page, that the

green and silver hunter had again made his appearance in the wood.

This conversation was put a stop to, much to the mortification of Morgante, who was dying to ask five hundred questions, and before all others, whether the lady Abbess was with her when she met him; but not even this could be pronounced, as the servant who brought the message remained within hearing, till they reached the door of the library.

As soon as they entered it, the Count exclaimed:—

“ My dear lady Juliet, all this is very extraordinary; but be assured you have my permission to please yourself in every way. Noble generosity, indeed, in your uncle, and not less so in yourself, my dear;—noble, indeed. I want you, if you have no objection, my dear Juliet, to send your page as a messenger to Torre Vecchia; but not if you wish to employ him elsewhere. In this, as in all things else, I would have you exactly follow your own wishes. Your aunt will explain to you, my dear, how anxious

I am that you should be your own mistress in all things."

Juliet, who knew not exactly to how great an extent her aunt had specified that her wishes for freedom might lead her, cast down her eyes, and said nothing.

"Shall your page go, my dear, to carry this invitation for us to your cousin?"

"Certainly, sir; and be sure he will deliver your message faithfully."

"Then go, boy," said the animated Count, addressing Morgante; "go to the town of Torre Vecchia, and inquire for Lord ——"

"Not so, brother," said Geraldine, interrupting him. "Let him inquire at the Golden Fleece for a young man called Signor Fraton; and to him it is that your message must be delivered."

The Count then charged the boy with a long string of compliments, and a vast deal about honour and happiness, all ending in the announcement, that the company of Signor Fraton was immediately requested at Albano.

Morgante listened to the long message so

attentively, that it was evident he intended to remember every word of it; nevertheless his quick eye shot a glance, every now and then, to the face of his young mistress, wherein he hoped to read an explanation of sundry intricate fancies which had taken possession of his imagination. But all he could clearly make out was, that lady Juliet certainly took as lively an interest in the message, as if Signor Fratoni and the hunter in green and silver, were one and the same person. On this point, however, his page-like curiosity would be speedily satisfied.

“And so she has told her father, now!—But it matters not,” thought Morgante, as he set off on his mission;—“and, after all, it is not much more strange than her taking a holy Abbess with her, to meet her lover in the wood. My lady Juliet is the sweetest lady ever born in Italy; but for the management of her love affairs, she has, in truth, some unaccountable fancies.”

The distance was soon passed, and Morgante entered the ever open door of the Golden Fleece, with an air of great importance, desiring to know

if a Signor Fratoni lodged there, and might be spoken with. He was attended to, with all the respect due to a messenger from the castle, and informed that the gentleman he wanted was probably at that moment parading a bit of table land, immediately above the house, which commanded a fine view, not only of the Adriatic, but also of a considerable part of the horse road which led from Albano. Morgante climbed the steep ascent, like a squirrel, and saw Lord Hubert at the farther end of the level space he had reached, with his back turned towards him, so that he was close behind him before he was aware of his approach.

“ Signor Fratoni !” said the page, in a voice sufficiently clear and audible to have been heard at a much greater distance.

The young man turned abruptly round, and when Morgante saw his face, he stepped back, took off his cap, and made a profound obeisance, uttering at the same time the single monosyllable, “ Oh !” but with such an accent as plainly enough expressed—“ It is you, is it ?”

Lord Hubert laughed good-humouredly, and replied :—

“ Even so, Morgante.”

“ Signor Fratoni,” repeated the boy, “ my lord the Count——.”

The aspect of Lord Hubert was instantly changed, the smile departed from his lips, and in an accent of much haughtiness, he interrupted him with—

“ Well, sir, what of the Count ?”

Morgante had been too long spoiled to be easily daunted, and instead of proceeding with his message, he said, after deliberately examining the countenance of his old acquaintance :

“ Their cousin ?—you may well be the cousin of our saintly Abbess, for you have just her sort of look, but I should never have guessed that our yellow little Count was of kin to you.”

Lord Hubert’s good humour returned, and in a tone more like what the boy had been accustomed to from him, he said :—

“ But your message, Morgante ? What says my lord the Count ? ”

The page then delivered, very faithfully, the ceremonious courtesies of his master, and Lord Hubert listened to them with rather more attention than their bearer thought they deserved; he then added, in a manner that showed he considered it as the most important part of his embassy—

“ But lady Juliet said in my ear, as I was passing out, ‘ Say to him, *immediately.* ’ ”

“ I will return with you, boy,” replied the young man, evidently feeling the full value of Juliet’s addition ; “ you shall have to wait but a moment.”

They accordingly returned to the little inn together, and Lord Hubert entered his chamber to seek a packet of papers, sent by his father, to be delivered to the Count d’Albano, in case the negociation with which he was charged, should reach a favourable termination.

“ Now then, sir page,” said he, gaily, as he returned to him, “ I am ready.”

“ Will Signor Fratoni be pleased to take the high road? or will he prefer the shortest path over the cliffs?”

“ The shortest path decidedly, Morgante,” replied the young man, smiling at the roguish emphasis with which the boy pronounced his borrowed name.

The young envoy led him up a path that greatly resembled a flight of steps hewn in the rock, and then by a short cut across the high ground on which stood the watch-tower, through the belt of oaks and chestnuts which sheltered the noble esplanade that fronted the castle. The most remarkable circumstance of the conversation that passed between them on the road, was the prodigious number of times that the page contrived to pronounce the name of Signor Fratoni.

“ You seem to have learned my name very perfectly, Morgante;—from whence did you hear it?”

“ From my lord the Count, Signor Fratoni. It was so long before I could find out that you

had any name at all, that it is quite a pleasure to me to speak it, Signor Fratoni, now that I know it so well, Signor Fratoni."

"Did lady Juliet tell you that was my name, Morgante?"

"No, Signor Fratoni—and I think it may be, that she will tell me, ere long, that I do not pronounce it properly, Signor Fratoni."

"Very likely, boy—and when she does, you may learn to pronounce it better—but not till then."

On reaching the castle, Lord Hubert was ushered, with much ceremony, and through an ostentatious display of domestics, to the parlour of the ladies, where he found the lord of the castle, with his sister and daughter, waiting his arrival. The Count was pompous, swelling, and nervous, but most overwhelmingly courteous in the welcome with which he received him. The beautiful countenance of lady Geraldine expressed satisfaction, yet it was blended with traces of emotion, to which many painful recollections had given birth; but Juliet seemed to

live only for the present moment, and her glowing cheek, her bright but conscious eye, and the trembling yet delighted agitation of her whole manner, spoke with most eloquent truth, the happiness she felt at seeing her lover welcomed to her father's mansion. Yet there was a moment when the haughty glance of Lord Hubert's eye, directed towards her father, made her tremble for the termination of a visit, upon which all the hopes of her future life depended; but her lover turned towards her, and read the look of imploring gentleness, with which she seemed to beg for his forbearance:—every feeling, except those of love and hope, was forgotten; and his changed manner spoke more forcibly than any words could have done, the joy he felt at the favourable issue of Geraldine's negotiation.

The evening passed, as Juliet thought, most delightfully; but, certainly, not without some feeling of embarrassment to the rest of the party. Little allusion was made by any one to family connexions and reminiscences, but the Count

dilated on the noble liberality of English sovereigns.

The next day was happier far. The first ceremonial of the reception over—the Count permitted his kinsman to wander with the ladies in the gardens and groves that surrounded his castle, without deeming it necessary to accompany them. He made some slight apology when the family rose from the breakfast table, for being obliged to repair to his library with Father Laurence, having business, as he assured them, of no ordinary importance to arrange with him.

Thus left to themselves, the day passed happily away.—There was certainly an especial pleasure to Juliet, in finding herself once more seated beside her lover under the chestnut tree; while the sweet enjoyment of the hour was unchecked either by terror of her father; or what, perhaps, was more appalling still,—the dread of speedy separation. Lady Geraldine had not yet completed her packet for Sant' Catharina's, and till the bell summoned them to the

mid-day meal, the lovers enjoyed, without restraint, the contemplation of the happy prospects before them. But in the afternoon Geraldine joined them, and called their attention to the necessity of announcing to the Count, the proposal of Lord Arlborough for a union of their children. Geraldine knew her brother too well, to fear that, under the present circumstances, he would oppose it; and Lord Hubert declared, half in earnest, half in jest, that he would carry Juliet off by force, if it proved otherwise.

“No, Hubert, no,” exclaimed Juliet; “no force, nor fraud either, dearest cousin. You cannot tell,—it is quite impossible that you should ever know the comfort, the delight, the unspeakable enjoyment of having no discovery to fear, and then,” she continued, looking away from them both, “I have another feeling that you cannot share—I wish most ardently to leave my father happy. If I can do so—no shadow of regret—nor any sting of conscience, will poison the dear years that lie before me.”

“Fear not, dearest,” said her aunt, embrac-

ing her ; “ nothing will arise to render void, so holy, and so natural a wish. You have yourself unconsciously paved the way for the easy arrangement of all we desire. Had you not proposed a second marriage to your father, it might have been difficult, in spite of our eloquent arrears, to convince my brother that your marrying an Italian nobleman was not absolutely necessary for his well-being. But now——fear nothing, Juliet, all will go well.”

Before supper, that same evening, lady Geraldine again requested an interview with her brother. His Confessor was again with him, but rose to depart as she entered.

“ Come in, lady Geraldine, come in,” said the Count, in his most courteous manner ; “ we have nothing to do just now——nothing but to wait the result. I shall be most happy to examine with you the documents my cousin spoke of, in the interval.”

The delivering these documents, which contained all particulars respecting the division of the arrears from Emersby, and also the deed of

conveyance of one-fourth part of the sum to Juliet, was the ostensible business for which Geraldine had sought this interview, though certainly, in her estimation, not the most important. She held the parchments in her hand, and the Count eyed them with a good deal of nervous impatience. There were several distinct memoranda, besides the deed of gift, and lady Geraldine untied the string that united them, while she led the conversation to the subject of Juliet's renouncement of the wealth thus vested in her.

“It is certainly a great sacrifice, Theodore, and as you have placed her in my hands, I should feel that I should be hardly right in permitting it, were it not that from the same generous relation, whence this noble present comes, a proposal has been made for her, which, if it be accepted, will place her in a station too exalted to make even this large sum of any real consequence.”

“Of what proposal do you speak, sister Geraldine?” said the Count, again regarding the

parchments which she still held, with looks of anxious curiosity.

“This, Theodore,” said the Abbess, answering rather to his looks than his words, “this parchment contains the estimate of the long arrears of the rents of Emersby—and this is a copy of the judgment by which the whole sum was awarded to the Earl of Arlborough.”

The Count stretched out his hand, and received them.

“The proposal I mentioned to you,” continued the Abbess, “was no less than an offer of marriage from the only son of our rich and noble uncle, to my niece, Juliet.”

“He is a heretic,” said the Count, knitting his brows. “It is impossible.”

“This document,” replied Geraldine, holding towards him another piece of parchment “is the conveyance of a fourth part of the whole sum to your daughter Juliet, to be at her sole and entire disposal from the day she attains her sixteenth year—that is nearly a year ago, is it not, Theodore?”

“ More, sister, more; Juliet has passed her seventeenth birth-day. But what is it you say of a marriage? It is certain that he is rich and noble,—but pray, Geraldine, is this the wish of Juliet?”

“ It is, Theodore.”

“ I thought she was wedded to the cloister.—Why, then, did she propose a second marriage to me? I thought she was determined to be a nun?”

“ You do not appear, dear Theodore, to understand the feelings and motives of Juliet. She knew that, being a female, she could not continue to her country the noble line of Albano, although she might inherit your lands—this was her reason for desiring that you should contract another marriage, and wish retiring for ever from the world.”

“ I had thought otherwise—quite otherwise. Let her marry, then, some Italian nobleman—.”

“ And her dower, brother?”

The Count's olive face became scarlet.

“ Surely, surely, sister Geraldine, Juliet has

decided for the cloister,—why should you seek to turn her from so holy a vocation?”

“I would not do so, Theodore, if I believed that such was now her deliberate choice; but in that case, my lord, she must not dispose of her wealth in the manner she now wishes to do. If she take the veil, she must of course endow the establishment she enters, with a property so entirely her own.”

“The holy Virgin guide me!” exclaimed the Count; “this seems to be a business of great and complicated difficulty; let me consult my Confessor, sister Geraldine,—will you consent to wait for my answer, till I hear his judgment?”

“Most certainly; but as Lord Hubert cannot remain here long, I will beg you not to delay informing me of the result.”

“You shall hear it within an hour; but leave these parchments with me; Father Laurence may better judge the question by knowing every thing relating to it.”

“I think he may,” replied the Abbess, gravely, and replacing on the table the parchments she had taken; “now then I leave you,

and will go to my own apartment, as I would wish to avoid seeing Lord Hubert till I know your pleasure. He is a noble youth, but something proud and hasty; till you have decided to reject his generous offer, I would not have him know that you could waver on it."

"The holy Virgin guide me!" repeated the Count, "and it is Father Laurence must tell me, what her will may be."

His sister left him, as his Confessor appeared.

"Here is a strange business come upon us, holy Father!" said the Count, as the monk entered, "and it is you must put me in the right path; it is you must tell me, on which side my strongest duty lies."

"Of a certainty will I, my beloved son," replied the Confessor, "why else am I here?"

"Tell me then," he continued, "with all the sincerity of true and holy confession, what it is that disturbs your noble mind."

The Count d'Albano had already communicated to his friend Father Laurence, the intelligence he had received the day before from the

Abbess, respecting the large sum which had been “awarded to his family” (for thus it was he described the deed of gift to Juliet) by his tramontane relatives. But he now found it necessary, in order that he might be more thoroughly understood, to recapitulate every part of the transaction, and make Father Laurence perfectly comprehend, before he gave his opinion, that not only the safety of lady Juliet’s soul, but his own possession of one-fourth part of twenty years’ arrears of the rents and profits of the abbey lands of Emersby, depended on the answer that should be given,

The monk heard him to the end with an earnest watchfulness of attention, very unlike the dreamy indifference, with which he generally listened to the long speeches of his patron ; and when he had concluded, he said :—

“ This case, my son, is one of much importance, and ought not, most certainly, to be decided lightly ; nevertheless, I fear not to answer you on the moment, for it seems to me as if the truth were borne in upon my mind, with more than

usual clearness, as I listen to you. Did nothing depend upon the question, but the simple alternative of your daughter, lady Juliet, being given in marriage to a heretic, on the one hand, and your forfeiting the possession of a sum of money, on the other, I scruple not to say, that it would be your bounden duty, as a catholic father, to abandon the world's wealth, and avoid perilling the precious safety of your child. But in truth, my son, this is not the question. If for the sake of avoiding a possible danger to lady Juliet (and we have no right to say that she has not strength to resist it), but if, to avoid the danger of shaking her belief, you renounce, at this critical juncture, the wealth that is placed within your reach, may you not thereby lose the blessed hope of raising up a defender of the true faith, in the dear and precious person of an eighth Count d'Albano? Think well of this, my beloved son, before you scorn the means, which it seems to me that providence has put into your hands, at the very moment that it was most needful to you; think well of it, and

may the blessing of the church follow your decision !”

“ Then you think it is my duty, as a pious catholic, to give my consent to this marriage, holy father ?”

“ I do, my son, unless indeed the holy Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s would think fit to oppose it.”

“ There is no danger of that, Father Laurence. It is quite plain to me, that the match is of her making. Who could have put it into the heads of these rich tramontanes but herself ?”

Father Laurence saw no use whatever in recurring to the scene that had recently passed in the judgment-hall of the Inquisition ; it could only puzzle the cause ; but he had not forgotten the youth in green and silver, who had been there spoken of ; nor the declaration of lady Juliet, that the youth was her affianced husband. There was no use in talking of all this, but he doubted not that this hunter and the cousin were one and the same person, and he thought to

himself, that it might have been lady Juliet's eyes, which put the notion of such a marriage into the head and heart of the young heir of Arlborough.

“However that may be, my dear son,” replied the monk, “it will render your duty,—for in this light only can we regard your unwilling consent to this marriage,—it will render your duty much less painful, when you consider that a person who stands so pre-eminently high in the estimation of our holy Father the Pope, approves this sacrifice of inclination to the interest of your country and of our holy religion. Not only must the approbation of the Abbess of Sant’ Catherina’s confirm your judgment and remove all your doubts, but it will, beyond all question, remove also the doubts of every other person, should any thing like doubt arise on the subject.”

“That is true, Father Laurence; I feel the strength of your arguments; and I will have twelve candles burnt before the shrine of St. Theodore, for having restored to me, at this

important crisis, so able and holy a counsellor as thou art."

"Alas, my son," replied the monk meekly, "not unto me, not unto me, be the praise. I have prayed for wisdom, that I might lead the noblest of patrons, and the best of men aright, through the mazy paths of this foul and sinful world; and sometimes, my son, I have thought that, perhaps, I have not prayed in vain."

Not all the pride of the Count d'Albano could prevent his being deeply touched by these words. He laid his hand affectionately on the shoulder of his friend, and replied:—

"I believe it, Father Laurence; I believe it!"

When the emotion produced by this little scene had subsided, the Count desired his Confessor to inform the Abbess, that he should be happy to see her, and they parted,—Father Laurence to seek a deputy for the delivery of this message; for, to say the truth, he would at any time have preferred taking his chance in the personal encounter with the prince of darkness, to having any direct intercourse with the Abbess

of Sant' Catherina's,—and the Count to the placid contentment which arose from knowing that his Confessor was ready to honour him as a saint, for doing that which would make him the very happiest man in the world.

It is unnecessary to describe minutely the interview which followed between the Count and his sister. The objects and wishes of both parties are too well known to the reader to leave him in doubt as to its amicable termination.

Nothing could exceed the happiness of Juliet, when she learned that, from being a wealthy heiress, she had again become portionless; except it were the delight with which Lord Hubert heard the assurance, that no further obstacle existed to his wishes, and that he might make the arrangements for conveying the aunt and niece to England, with all the celerity he chose.

It will be readily believed that he was not slow in acting upon this permission. The vessel which had brought him direct from London to the little harbour of Torre Vecchia, lay waiting

for his commands; but a few days were actively employed in making such additions to the accommodations on board, as time and circumstance permitted.

CHAPTER XL.

The storm is up, and all is on the hazard.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE this was going forward, the Abbess prepared to dispatch a trusty messenger to Ancona, with the unexpected resignation of her high office, and her last farewell to her nuns. The former was a mere formal document, addressed to the new Abbot of Sant' Andrea's, in his capacity of visitor to her convent; for it was a part of his duty, as such, to answer the resignation, and to appoint a time for the election of a new Abbess.

Her letter to the nuns was as follows:—

*“ Geraldine d’ Albano to the Community of Sant’
Catherina’s di Siena, near Ancona.*

“ MY BELOVED CHILDREN,

“ WHEN I tell you that these lines are to bid you farewell, I have no need to add, that they are written with a tearful eye, and a reluctant hand; neither can it be necessary to assure you, that nothing but the consciousness of feelings too powerful to be overcome, and which must prevent my ever being to you again what I have been, could induce me to leave you. My dear and excellent friend, the Abbess of St. Ildefonse, conveyed to you the welcome news—for such I well know it was—of my acquittal from the charges brought against me before the holy Inquisition. Nothing could be more gratifying to me, than the manner in which this acquittal was pronounced; but it could not heal the wound, which the condemnation of sister Camilla had inflicted on my heart. I believed that con-

demnation to be unjust; yet I had no power to save her. It is for this that I leave you. It is because I will not hold a station that, with all power to rule, gives none to protect those committed to my care. I have said that I believed the condemnation of Camilla to be unjust; but I had then no proof to offer that it was so, save her own word.

“I believed that word, although no other did—and in justice to her memory among you, I must state, that in Rome I heard that which fully confirmed her statement.

“Camilla was a wedded wife when she was placed by force within the cloister. She never took the vows—but her refusal to do so, was either unheard, or unheeded, by those around her. So much I say in justice to the Countess di Mondello, for such is her rank. What her ultimate fate has been, I know not; but I fear, I greatly fear, she must have fallen into the power of the late Abbot of St. Andrea; for had not her escape been intercepted, I see not how it could have become known to him. He would not spare

her.—I tremble to think, that even now she may be within the walls of the dreadful prison which I have so lately left : but it is wrong, my children, to communicate to you my inquietudes on her account—you will show them too sensibly.

“It is, then, this frightful occurrence which has determined me to leave you, and seek, in a distant land, more peace of mind and conscience, than I could ever again hope to feel, while holding the exalted station of your Abbess.

“Farewell, my dear friends ! may the God of all men preserve and bless you !”

“At whatever distance, or however silently may pass her latter days, while she remains in life, you will never be without the blessings and the prayers of

“GERALDINE D’ALBANO.”

To the Abbess of St. Ildefonse, she also addressed an affectionate farewell ; nor was the gentle Abbot of St. Andrea forgotten.

To his exertions she indeed owed much—It was he who wrote the letter to Father Laurence,

which induced lady Juliet and Francesco Gar-roni to undertake their important journey to Rome; and it was he who prevailed on the venerable Abbess of St. Ildefonse to set forth on the same long pilgrimage.

The effect they produced upon the trial has been already shown; and the letter from Geraldine, which assured the good old man, that she believed her safety to be greatly owing to his exertions in her behalf, was little less gratifying to him, than the nomination to his splendid Abbey.

During the interval thus occupied, the Count had dispatched another offer of marriage; and whether it were that he had taken Juliet's hint, and chosen the object of his vows more discreetly, or that the improved statement he was able to make, of his pecuniary intentions in her favour, occasioned the different result, it might be difficult to decide; perhaps both causes had their share in producing the result, which was, a gracious acceptance on behalf of the lady, from her brother the Marquis of Calatonia. The joy

which this success occasioned to the Count, spread itself, like oil, over the entire household; not a face but wore a smile of satisfaction or of fun—even Olive forgot her wrath, and consented once more to confess her sins to Father Laurence. Juliet's heart bounded with pleasure as she contemplated all the happiness she had occasioned, and when she opened the casket of trinkets, that had been purchased for the ungrateful lady Claudia, and witnessed the gratification of her father as he examined them, she was too gaily happy to afford a single sigh to the recollection of the heart-broken youth who had watched her, as she enfolded them in soft wool for their journey.

Morgante, was the only one of all the household, that either lady Geraldine or her niece felt desirous of taking with them to England. Juliet, probably from not liking her personal attendant, was less helpless and dependent upon the services of a waiting-maid, than most young ladies of condition; and the simplicity of a conventual toilet had set lady Geraldine almost

wholly free from such thralldom ; so that they both agreed in preferring to trust themselves to the handmaids of merry England, than to increase the difficulties of the long voyage, by adding any timid females to their train.

Nothing could so effectually have removed every shadow of regret from the mind of Juliet upon leaving her father for ever, as the hilarity of spirits which rendered it impossible for him to conceal his perfect contentment at her departure.

The only trace of sorrow produced by the approaching separation, might be seen on the countenance of Father Laurence, as he gazed wishfully on the laughing face of Morgante. A suspicious person might perhaps have been led to think, that there must have been some tie, stronger than the regard of a ghostly father, to cause the heavy sigh with which he uttered, “ And so, Morgante, I must never see thee more, boy !”

Old Marietta, indeed, who happened to be within hearing when he uttered some such ex-

pression, made a shrewd remark to one of the men who stood near her :—

“ Might one not say, Riccardo, that the holy Confessor loves that boy as well as if he were the natural father of him ?”

But it must be remembered, that in no one age of the church have there been wanting persons ever ready to launch such unmerited taunts as this against its professors. The day fixed for the departure of the noble party arrived; every thing that the ingenuity of Lord Hubert could suggest to make the voyage comfortable, was already on board; and escorted by the Count and his Confessor, they set off from Albano. After a ride entirely occupied by the repetition of the hopes and wishes of those who were to go, and those who were to stay, for the future happiness of each other, they arrived at Torre Vecchia, and the voyagers were speedily conveyed aboard.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that the anchor of the good ship *Enterprise* was raised, and with a skilful hand at the helm, which

gave such of her sails as were unfurled, enough of the breeze to take her clear from among the shipping that surrounded her, she slowly and steadily wore her way beyond them. During the time occupied by this manœuvre, our party stood at the stern, gazing on the slowly receding objects they had left, and waving a last adieu to those they were never to see again; but when it was completed, they were requested to seat themselves where the bustle occasioned by getting under full sail, would not annoy them. Accordingly, lady Geraldine, for we must no longer call her the Abbess, placed herself with her two young cousins beside her, on a bench that was pointed out to them, and gave herself up, with an intensity of pleasure her past life had seldom permitted her to indulge, to the exhilarating beauty of the scene. The clear autumnal sky, the bright blue waves of the Venetian Gulf, and the favouring breeze, before which they bounded over it, were all enjoyed by her, with the freshness of young and unexhausted feeling. Her companions were in the situation

which, perhaps, beyond all others, renders external objects indifferent; and when she turned towards them, with an almost involuntary exclamation of delight, a vague and unmeaning repetition of "beautiful!" "glorious!" or any other words she happened to use, was all the reply she obtained. Yet even in this insensibility to what so charmed her, she found another source of pleasure.

It proved that they were too happy in themselves to have a thought for any thing beyond their own delightful feelings, and their happiness was her work. Calm, soothing, and most delicious to them all, were the hours of evening which preceded that at which the attentive captain advised them to go below. Their accommodation had been, as we have said, studiously provided for with all which, in that age, was thought most likely to ensure their comfort during the voyage; and if it did not amount to the draperied elegance of a modern state-room, it was sufficient to call forth their smiles and their gratitude towards Lord Hubert and the captain;

both of whom had for many days exercised their utmost skill to render their cabin as comfortable as possible. Morgante had long before climbed, and clambered, and sung himself into a state of excessive weariness, and he was already fast asleep in the berth assigned him near that of Lord Hubert. But Juliet and her aunt sat down together on the small couch that was screwed to the floor of the cabin, before they prepared to creep into their tiny beds. The wind was so moderate, and so favourable, that they felt no inconvenience from the movement of the ship; and never had any fellow-voyagers more pleasurable subjects to discuss. Every thing before them was bright with hope, novelty, and happiness; nor was there in the heart of either a single feeling of regret for aught they had left behind.

Juliet had so long known, that her father's design was to part from her; that leaving him, as she did, surrounded with all he wished, it would have been worse than folly to have felt or fancied a sorrow upon his account; and they

were both conscious that the country they were going to was, for a thousand reasons, more their own than the fair land they left. In short, they were, and acknowledged themselves to be, happy to the very summit of their wishes. The morning rose with a sun as bright, and a breeze as favouring; and they wearied not, nor believed they ever could weary, of the beauties of sea and sky which surrounded them. These objects, for ever varying, yet for ever the same, must be known and studied, before any just idea of their unceasing beauty and interest can be conceived.

Every successive hour of the day, every cloud that wanders across the heavens, whether light, bright, and fleecy, or heavy, dark, and solemn, forms a new picture, and a different charm. The weather, too, was exactly such as could best enable them to taste it. There was neither heat nor cold to check their enjoyment; and as the morning and evening report of the log book was reported to them by the attentive captain, they almost feared, much as they loved

to anticipate the scenes they were going to, that their delightful voyage would too soon be over.

They had continued for rather more than a month on board, with weather of almost unvarying serenity, and a wind that seemed only to change as they wished it, bringing them in that period within a day's sail of the coast of Cornwall, when they, at length, acknowledged to each other, that their hearts were beginning to outrun the wind, and that they should hail the voice that told them England was in sight. The captain declared, that it was likely enough that this news might greet them when they left their cabins on the morrow; and this assurance, while it raised their spirits to the exact pitch for enjoying every thing around them, made them eager to taste all the pleasures of their last evening upon the lovely ocean. Accordingly, they once more placed themselves upon their favourite seat, and watched the indescribable glory of the sun, as he went down amid a world of gold and crimson;

nature furnishes no object comparable to this. From the first moment that the slanting ray is caught by the wavy surface of the sea, to the last broken gleam that remains upon it, a ceaseless succession of brightness and of beauty meets the eye, during a brilliant sunset on the ocean. Every change appears to bring fresh offerings to its awful majesty, and splendour upon splendour rolls on before us, till the imagination is lost and confounded in the unspeakable grandeur of the scene.

Our party remained almost immoveable, as they watched the gorgeous pageant fade away ; nor did they leave their places till Lord Hubert remarked, that Juliet drew her mantle closer round her, as if sensible of the chilliness of the evening air.

“ I must not let your health suffer at your first approach to our misty island, Juliet,” said he, rising ; “ or you will call it, as those of your sunny clime too often do, the region of aches and rheums.”

“ Fear it not, cousin,” she replied ; “ that

mist must be dark indeed, that shall make me deem England less fair, or at any rate less dear, than Italy."

"I think so too, Juliet," said lady Geraldine; "and yet I will not deny that there is a shrewd keenness in the air to-night, that will make the shelter of our little cabin feel agreeable."

As they turned to reach the stairs which led to it, they remarked the captain standing on the side of the vessel, opposite the place where they had been sitting, with his eyes earnestly bent towards the east. They naturally looked in the same direction, but could discern nothing, except a small black speck a little above the horizon, which might have almost been mistaken for a bird.

"What are you looking at, captain?" said Lord Hubert, stepping towards him.

"I was looking at that small cloud, my lord," he replied; "we shall have wind, I think, before the morning."

“Can that black speck announce it?” said lady Geraldine, who, with Juliet, had also drawn near the captain.

“I think it does, my lady,” said the man; “but if we lower sail, and lay to for a few hours, we have nothing to fear. We have plenty of sea room as yet.”

These words, though they were hardly sufficient to create fear, awakened a sort of nervous interest in the approach of the cloud; and lady Geraldine proposed that they should envelope themselves in the large cloaks, which Lord Hubert’s care had provided for the voyage, and watch the heavens for an hour or two, ere they retired to rest. Juliet earnestly seconded the proposal; and, in a few moments, they were again seated in their former position, clothed in such a manner, as even their careful cousin thought would secure them from all danger of cold. When this wrapping up was completed, and they were again at leisure to look at the sky, they were much surprised, and, perhaps,

all of them somewhat alarmed, at perceiving the great change which a few minutes had made in the aspect of the heavens.

The whole eastern hemisphere was already nearly covered with dark and heavy masses of clouds, sailing rapidly along, while working up against the wind, the same vapours, which half an hour before had glowed around the sun in treacherous splendour, now came, with a lurid remnant of their crimson colouring, to meet, and, as it should seem, give battle to these driving squadrons of black giants, which appeared rushing towards them from the east.

There is something sinister and alarming, even to an inexperienced ear, in the strange whistle that passes through the shrouds, before the wind is fully up. The sea, too, seems to work, and heave silently, without apparent cause, while the dark clouds above twist and curl themselves together, in shapes that threaten mischief. All this was seen, and darkly felt, by Geraldine and Juliet; but when for an instant they withdrew their eyes from the heavens, their alarm

became infinitely stronger, as they remarked the unusual activity of the men, many of whom were half hid among the flapping sails, which they were labouring to secure, before the storm burst over them. Deeper yet was their consciousness of approaching danger, as they marked the pale cheek of Lord Hubert. Even in the gloom of the fast closing darkness, the feeling expressed by his countenance was perceptible.

“ You fear for us, Hubert,” said lady Geraldine, gravely.

“ Think what a precious freight is borne by this frail vessel, dearest Geraldine ! But I believe her to be perfectly sea-worthy ; our captain I know well, for an experienced and skilful navigator ; and, in short, I think my dislike to all this bustle is more in proportion to my love for you both, than to any idea of danger I may conceive from it.”

Juliet spoke not a word, but there was something approaching to sublime, in the deep and quiet expression of her eye, as it turned from the sea to the heavens, and ran over the dark

harmony of that leaden hue which pervaded each. The very intensity of her fears seemed to give firmness to her spirit. Her own life, and the lives of the only beings she loved on earth, were threatened—but if they should perish, it would be together—none would be left to mourn; and, with this gloomy consolation, she braced her mind to meet all that should come upon them. Geraldine looked at her pale face and full dark eyes, now raised to the heavens, and then again seeming to search for the still hidden terrors of the sea, till her own fortitude sank, and melted away before the thought of the danger which was so surely approaching.

“ Here it comes !” coolly observed a seaman, who was employed in securing some ropes at the side of the vessel, near which our party were stationed.

His words made them all look in the direction to which he turned; and though, in their ignorance, they read not the signs, which met their eyes, as distinctly as he did, they felt that he

spoke true, and that the enemy they dreaded was upon them.

The air, which, though day-light had faded with unusual rapidity, still remained clear, and free from fog or mist, now looked, at the apparent distance of a few hundred yards, like a palpable wall of utter darkness, moving onward, and threatening to overwhelm them in impenetrable night. The sea became suddenly agitated, and the vessel pitched violently, but still without their being conscious of any wind. This lasted but one moment, in the next they were gasping for power to breathe, in the fearful whirlwind that enveloped them. Lord Hubert, who sat between his cousins, threw an arm round each; and, without this support, they could not have retained their position, so violent was the motion of the ship, and the action of the wind that drove against them. At this moment, and with no preparation from slight flashes, a sudden stream of lightning shot across the heavens, that seemed to blast the sight; and, ere they were

conscious it was gone, the thunder burst above their heads, with that fearful cracking sound which speaks concussion near us.—“ Oh God ! have mercy !” exclaimed Juliet ; but even Hubert heard her not ; the sea had already reached that pitch of fury which forbids any noise but its own to be listened to ; and the next instant a mighty wave broke over the vessel, and drenched them in its heavy brine.

“ Below !” roared the captain, in a voice that in the interval which occurred between the bursting of one wave and the collection of the next, was audible through the tempest :—“ Below with the women !—this is no night for them.” But no seaman was at leisure to obey him. The storm had risen so rapidly, and the previous weather had led them to display so much canvas, that every man was straining to prepare the vessel for the struggle she had to undergo ; and as the captain addressed himself to no one in particular, no one left the urgent work which engaged him, to attend to the trembling females. But it was indeed necessary that they should

retire ; already drenched to the skin, and suffering from the dreadful sickness which few, save thorough-bred seamen, can withstand in such weather, they both made an effort to rise, but they found it was quite impossible for Lord Hubert to conduct them together ; the tremendous pitching of the vessel, the wet and slippery deck, and the rude wind that battled and buffeted with them, at every step they took, soon convinced all three of the futility of the attempt. Geraldine disengaged her arm, and staggered back to the seat they had left. To make herself heard was out of the question, but Lord Hubert understood her, and hurried forward with the drooping and passive Juliet, whose terrors were for the moment lost sight of in that exceeding misery of bodily suffering, which makes us, at such moments, almost hope, rather than fear to perish. Yet even in this state, her kind heart reminded her of Morgante, who as usual had wearied himself by his incessant gambols, and retired to bed, while the rest of the party were still engaged in watching the brilliant congrega-

tion of clouds that were so soon to change their treacherous aspect of beauty into one of terror. With the assistance of Lord Hubert, she crawled to the berth where he lay, and equally to her surprise and satisfaction, found him in so profound a sleep, that the rude rocking, by which he was thrown from side to side in his well-secured tenement, disturbed him no more, than the gentle movement of a mother's knee disturbs her infant. "Happy child!" murmured Juliet, as she crept on to her own cabin, "when shall I sleep like you?"

Lord Hubert now bitterly lamented that he had suffered his cousins to undertake the voyage without female attendance; though it is more than probable that whatever number of women they might have brought with them, would have been just so many more sources of sorrow and suffering, during the hours that their services were the most wanted. This inevitable truth, however, was very naturally lost sight of by the young nobleman, when he laid poor Juliet on her bed, and was obliged to leave her helpless,

suffering, and alone, while he turned his own unsteady steps back again, to seek her aunt.

Geraldine suffered less from bodily indisposition than Juliet; but her mind was only left more at leisure to taste, in all its bitterness, the horrors of the scene.

Before Lord Hubert returned to her, lightning had struck the main-mast, and shivered it from top to bottom. Fortunately, it had not caught fire, but the ropes were torn, and the spars shattered, presenting, as the quick-coming flashes made the desolation visible to her eyes, an aspect of hopeless ruin, that seemed to menace inevitable destruction. When he approached her, she rose without saying a word, and yielded to his guidance, till he had placed her beside his pale and trembling Juliet.

It would be worse than idle to follow them through the weary hours of that dreadful night. It passed, and day-light came. But it brought no alleviation of their terrors. Lord Hubert, who was an excellent sailor, had not lain down, and their only consolation, if such indeed it

might be called, was derived from his visits to their cabin. To him these visits would have been less painful, had it not been so difficult to answer the languishing inquiries of the poor sufferers, without adding to their miserable and too well-founded terrors. The vessel still obeyed the helm, but there appeared little hope that she could long continue to do so. Spar after spar had given way, and the jury-mast, by which they had supplied the one destroyed by lightning, bent before the blast like a reed.

Hitherto the wind had blown from a quarter which enabled the captain to keep the labouring vessel off the dangerous coast of Cornwall; but he knew they were so near it, that should the tempest change its direction, they had every thing to fear from the probability of being driven upon the rocks. Three of the sailors knew this as well as himself, but the rest of the crew were Portuguese and Italians, little acquainted with the perilous navigation of the British Channel.

Neither to these men, nor to his suffering

passengers, did he name the fear that haunted him; and as they saw him standing at the bow of his vessel, with his keen eye sometimes following the direction of the driving clouds, and sometimes looking out eagerly a-head, they thought that he was watching for some hoped for indication that the wind would fall.

Lord Hubert, though by no means aware of their exact position, soon perceived, while studying the anxious face of the captain, that some danger threatened, greater still than what was already upon them.

“Are there breakers a-head, captain Jones?” said he, with that forced calmness which shows more strength of nerve, than tranquillity of mind.

“Not rightly a-head, my lord,” replied the captain; “and as long as the wind blows from the westward, we are safe; but within this half hour——” he stopped, and left the sentence unfinished.

“Seek not to conceal the truth from me, captain Jones, I pray you. Tell me at once, is

the wind such as to drive us upon the coast of Cornwall?"

"Not if it blow as it did five minutes ago, Lord Hubert. But do you not see—Luff! luff!" he cried, running hastily toward the helm, and laying his own powerful hand on the tiller, at which two of his best men were placed.

Lord Hubert had followed him, but saw it was no time for questions.

For a moment captain Jones kept his station at the helm, and then exclaimed:—

"By G—d she minds it no more than if I drew her with a silken thread. Let down the boat!" he cried, while his voice vainly struggled with the bellowing wind to make itself heard by the men. He seconded the words by an action of the hand, and the helmsman stepped forward to repeat the order, and assist in the execution of it. Jones still kept his hand idly upon the helm; but his eyes followed the men who were engaged in preparing the boat. Again he tried the rudder, and again the ship missed stays.

"All then is over?" said Lord Hubert, in the

accent of a man who insists upon a direct answer.

“An hour more of this, and you will see the Lizard right before us,” replied the captain, “and not all the power of man will keep her together for an hour afterward.”

“Shall I prepare the women for taking to the boat?” inquired the young man, with the appearance of more firmness than the captain showed in answering him. Jones at first pointed silently to the sea, and the action was but too intelligible. The mighty waves swelled round them, and the horrid blast that drove them onward, appeared to dive into the black abyss beneath, and raise the ocean up by its gigantic force, till every wave seemed threatening to crush them.

“Poor souls!” said he at length; “yet ’tis their only chance. Bring them on deck, my lord.”

Those who have beheld the sea during a hurricane, who have watched the enormous power of the waves raising their white heads

towards the heavens, and the black depths more hideous still, that yawn between them, may conceive the feelings of Lord Hubert as he prepared to place the women he loved in the small boat that was to be lowered into the raging sea. But he had a brave English heart within him, which reproached him for one short moment's contemplation of his own misery—"God's will be done!" said he, and stedfast to perform his task, he hastened below, to summon those he loved so truly, to instant danger, and perhaps to death. He would have answered their eager questions, by a somewhat mitigated account of the scene which awaited them—but the delusive kindness did not succeed, even for an instant—the momentary hesitation, the averted eye, the trembling lips, were at once understood with terrible distinctness.

Lady Geraldine silently threw her arms round Juliet, and pressed her lips on her pale forehead:—

"Now I am ready, Hubert," she said, prepar-

ing unassisted to leave the cabin:—"Help your poor Juliet, she is weaker than I am."

"Not so, not so," cried Juliet eagerly.—"Oh, let us keep together—let us die together!" and while she clung with one hand to the arm that supported her, she stretched out the other to her aunt, and addressing her poor little page, who stood trembling behind her, she bade him follow her closely.

"Fear not that I shall be far from you, my child!" replied Geraldine, taking her cold hand, and pressing it to her bosom: "that I am so near you, is the only comfort left."

When they all reached the deck, they found that the boat was already suspended over the side of the vessel, and the men were employed in securing within her, whatever would be most likely to contribute to their safety. The boat was capable of containing the whole crew, and the men were still perfectly under command, so that no fear presented itself of that frightful crowding into her, which often produces such fatal results.

Captain Jones explained to Lord Hubert, that he was waiting to approach the shore as nearly as might be done without striking, in order to shorten as much as possible the distance between them and the landing that he hoped to reach.

The ship was now driving before the wind at a tremendous rate, and through the spray and mist which enveloped them, they caught occasional glimpses of the land.

“That is England then !” thought Geraldine, but she sought not to communicate the bitter feeling that this suggested, to her companions. She still held the hand of Juliet, who was placed between herself and Lord Hubert ; and all three clung to the side of the vessel to which the boat was suspended.

“We are very near, sir !” said an English sailor, who stood close to the captain.

“I know it, Marshal,” replied captain Jones, —“but how many minutes could the boat live in this?”

Still they drove onward.

“If she strikes, captain,” said the same man,

“we shall not remain above water long enough to lower the cords, and get off.”

“I must be near enough to distinguish the cliff, Marshal, before I trust to the boat,” was the answer, and still they drove onward.

“Now then, now, get into her, for the love of God !” shouted the captain. The men rushed forward, and many of them sprang into the boat, while Lord Hubert and Geraldine were occupied in persuading Juliet to suffer his placing her in it the first.

“Obey me, Juliet,” exclaimed Geraldine, disengaging herself from her grasp. “Obey me, Juliet !”

“This is madness,” cried Lord Hubert, endeavouring to seize her in his arms by force.

“Not so,—I am not mad, Hubert,” replied the struggling girl, “but she shall not be the last.” She succeeded in disengaging herself, and threw her arms round the mast with an air of such desperate resolution, that in order to save the precious moments, Lord Hubert yielded to her will,—and Geraldine, terrified by the vehement

cries of the captain for dispatch, made no further resistance, but hurried onward to the place where the crew were already lowering the heavy boat.

Lord Hubert sprang into her, in order to receive Geraldine in his arms as she descended:—

“Now!” he exclaimed, “now, Geraldine!” she lost not a moment, but threw herself after him. He placed her securely in the bottom of the boat, and then prepared himself again to mount the ship’s side. At that instant the vessel struck against a rock, and the concussion was so violent as to make him quit his hold, and fall backwards amongst his terrified companions. The vessel in her rebound, seemed to draw the water with her, from the hideous mass that reared its dark strength to destroy them—one moment more, and she must strike again. Two amongst those already in the boat saw the inevitable grave which gaped to receive them, and in an instant severed the ropes that held her to the ship; as they did so, a lad, who had attached himself greatly to Morgante during the voyage,

sprang from the ship's side into the boat, holding the boy in his arms, and fell almost directly on Lord Hubert, who was struggling to recover his feet: before he had succeeded in doing so, the ship was already distant. Who shall describe the agony of that moment? Who shall paint the bitter anguish of Geraldine, the wild despair of Hubert? He madly tried to spring into the sea, but a strong man, who stood beside him, thrust him rudely down:—

“No boy's tricks here, my lord—would you upset the boat?” the extremity of Lord Hubert's agony probably saved his life; for, after a faint struggle to rise again and repeat the effort, all strength and all sensation left him, and he dropped insensible upon the seat.

Juliet felt the vessel strike, and clung the tighter to the friendly mast; but she saw not the boat quit the ship's side, she knew not that she was left alone.

The brave captain almost forgot the death that stared him in the face, as he turned his eyes upon the desolate girl. Again the vessel

struck,—and the fearful sound of water rushing into her hold was plainly heard. Captain Jones rushed to the mast, by which poor Juliet still held, but her grasp was become feeble, for the sea, which broke again and again over her, had drenched and chilled her limbs. He took her in his arms, and with all the care the dreadful moment permitted, bound her firmly to a large plank that lay upon the deck, then throwing off his shoes and jacket, he stood beside her, waiting till his ship should sink beneath him. Nor had he long to wait,—a gurgling sucking sound showed that the time was come, and in another moment the raging waves received them. Most of the men who were left on board, had seized on some loose spar, which helped them for a while to float upon the foaming surf. But many groaned forth their last breath, unheeded, amid the fearful uproar of that hour.

Captain Jones had fastened the end of the rope with which he had secured Juliet, round his arms, and swimming with no common

strength and skill, he cleared the frightful rocks, among which the ship had foundered, and occasionally relieving himself by sustaining his weight upon Juliet's plank, he towed her safely for more than a mile, through that tremendous sea, towards the shore. Yet still the beach was distant, and he felt his strength failing. He knew every inch of the coast, and that they had passed the line of breakers, which must at once have destroyed his poor charge, had she been borne against them. He felt that her best chance was now to float onward with the strong tide, which had accelerated their destruction, and slipping from his arm the rope he had put round it, he left her to her fate, well knowing that in doing so, he gave her the best chance for life. He felt his strength sinking fast, and knew that the plank, which was well able to support her, would be dragged down, were his weight attached to it, when he was no longer able, by any movement, to assist its buoyancy. The pang with which he did this, was as much for her, as for himself,—but at that moment it

was he alone who suffered, for Juliet was no longer conscious either of pain or danger.

They were now sufficiently near the shore for many to see their perilous condition ; yet still too distant for any aid to reach them. Many people on the cliffs had seen the vessel go down, and watched the floating specks around her, knowing them to be the wretched victims of the wreck, yet totally unable to assist them, for no boat could have lived for a moment in the raging surf that rolled and roared between them, and the objects of their vain pity.

Either from the accidental impulse of a wave, or from some other cause, captain Jones was immediately and widely separated from the object of his care.

Juliet was borne onward, sometimes darkly visible to those who watched her from the shore, towards which she was rapidly borne by the strong current of the tide, and already her long dark hair was distinguished, floating like a mass of sea-weed upon the water.

“ It is a woman, by heaven ! ” exclaimed a

young sailor, from the group which hung foremost over the cliff that commanded the terrific scene.—“ We cannot stand here and watch her perishing, without something done, if only for our own heart’s ease—come with me, some of you, for the love of God !”

Without waiting for an answer, he rapidly descended the cliff, followed by three stout fishermen, and having reached the foot of it, all four paused for a moment to consult what means could be taken to rescue the floating female, who was already sufficiently near the shore, to be seen from the spot where they then stood, as she rose high on every succeeding wave that rushed onward towards them. All agreed that no boat could be manageable in the wild eddies of the surf through which she was carried, but the athletic seaman, who had first descried her, proposed to trust himself among them, with ropes fastened round him, by which he could be assisted in his return, should his efforts to reach her prove vain. As nothing better could be thought of, this desperate scheme was adopted ;

ropes were quickly furnished from the neighbouring cabins, and carefully fastened round him, while the other ends were secured in the strong grasp of his companions.

More than one female came forth from the shelter of her hut to watch his bold enterprise, and their shrill voices were heard above the blast, as they one and all begged him to desist from an undertaking threatening so much danger to himself, and promising so little chance of aid to the object of his generous compassion. But every moment added to his eager wish to make the trial, for every moment brought the figure of Juliet nearer to his sight. Cheered by the men, warned by the women, and almost deafened by the roaring surge near which he stood, the brave young man sprang forward, and, for many moments, baffled the force which drove him backward, with equal energy of mind and limb. But it was all in vain. Man may do much in leading nature to perform his will; but he must work with, and not against her power. Again and again, the little progress which the

most vehement exertions of strength had enabled him to make, was lost by the resistless sweep of a gigantic wave, till at length he felt that all his remaining force would hardly enable him to save himself, by keeping afloat amid the overwhelming surge that broke around him. A few moments, however, threw him safely, but completely exhausted, at the feet of his friends, whose attention was now wholly directed to conveying him to shelter, and restoring him to life and animation.

At the distance of half a mile from the cluster of fishermen's cabins, near which this noble but vain attempt had been made, was a sandy creek, which would have made a much better shelter for the boats, than the point beneath the cliff, had it not been that the sand here often drifted so high, as to render it a very laborious task to put a boat to sea, that had been laid up there. One single dwelling stood beside it, which was inhabited by a widow, who, when she lost her husband, lost his boat too, and had no longer the power of carrying on her trade as before; but still con-

trived to find wherewithal to exist, by watching, with her little boy, for the crabs that were brought into this creek by the tide. It was to this spot that the insensible body of Juliet was borne. The last wave on which she floated ran far up into the creek, and rushed back, leaving an end of the plank, to which she was attached, bedded firmly in the sand. The tide was already at its height, and not even the blustering gale, which still continued, could prevent the necessitous widow from creeping out a few moments after it had turned, to seek for the fish, on the sale of which her livelihood depended. A boy of ten years old followed her, and, before they had advanced three paces from their hut, they both perceived the body of Juliet, now lying entirely out of the water. A scream of horror burst from both.

“She be dead, mother! she be dead!” exclaimed the boy, as he ran towards her; “dead and cold, sure enough!” he continued, kneeling down beside her, and touching her face.

The woman knelt down too, and looked at her

earnestly for a moment. Her life had been passed on a coast that gave them, as it ever must do, sadly frequent opportunity for gaining experience in all the scenes of death and danger which shipwreck brings; she doubted if Juliet were completely dead; and, without wasting time to utter a command, she strode back into her cabin for a knife, with which she speedily cut the cords that bound her; she then easily raised her in her arms, and bore her to her hut. A peat fire glowed upon the hearth, and, having dismissed her boy to beg a drop of wine from the village pastor, she stripped her wet garments from her, and wrapping her in the only blanket she possessed, laid her before it, while she chafed her chest and limbs with her hands. Her care was almost immediately rewarded by evident indications of returning life; but so feeble was the pulse, and so irregular and labouring the action of the lungs, that she doubted if there were strength enough left in the delicate being before her, to endure the struggle of reviving animation. She had nothing for her to swallow, which might

rouse and sustain this strength; and her only hope for this most needful succour rested on the message she had dispatched by her boy.

But much before any relief from that quarter could possibly reach her, a party of those who had remained at the look-out upon the cliff, and from thence watched all that had occurred in front of widow Martin's cabin, arrived there, and as more than one among them was furnished with a flask of liquor, the kind widow was enabled to try the remedy which not only herself, but the whole of the experienced village of Penlynn, considered as the most efficacious that could be applied, nor were they disappointed in its effects. Juliet swallowed the cordial; her eyes opened for a moment, and the strong shiver that ran through her limbs showed returning life, though accompanied with suffering.

“What hands! what a skin!” exclaimed the widow, as she gazed with admiration at the object of her charitable care; “she is a lady, if ever there was one born. I wish, Jack

Nichols, you would run to Justice Oldham's, and ask madam's own waiting-woman to come here to look at her. It would be nothing for such as we, to pass our word for her being a lady, but perhaps if Mistress Margaret were to say as much, it may lead them to ask her up there. God is witness, I have no place fit to put such an one as this in."

"And that's a truth, mother," replied the man she addressed; "I'll be gone and back before you could think it; but hark ye, don't spare the liquor; trust me, 'twill save her, if any thing this side heaven can do it."

CHAPTER XLI.

One whose heart is buttoned up with steel.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE more perfect poor Juliet's restoration to life became, the more evident were the indications of approaching fever; the shiverings were strong and frequent; and, excepting that once, when she opened her eyes, she looked round her as if seeking for those she had lost, she gave those about her no reason to believe, that she was conscious of any thing that was passing.

Before Jack Nichols returned from his embassy, Jem Martin had happily accomplished that on which he had been previously dispatched. He not only presented his mother with a little

jug of wine, but announced that the minister was on his road to visit the drowned woman.

The good widow, true to her faith, that whatever was intoxicating, must be beneficial to a person in the condition of her guest, exerted herself to make Juliet swallow a portion at least of this new supply, but was stopped short, before she had succeeded in doing so, by the entrance of the minister. We have not leisure here to describe this worthy divine at length, and all that is necessary that the reader should know of him may be comprised in the assurance, that he was a perfect sample of the most zealous of the reformed clergy of that age. He had a thousand good qualities, but his terror of popery hung so heavily about him, that he was not always capable of acting according to the dictates of his heart, or even of his reason. He had suffered fearful persecution during the reign of Mary, and his reverence for her royal sister, whose accession had changed his prison and his poverty into freedom and prosperity, was so blended and mixed up with his hatred for the

Pope, that he considered any feeling which approached to religious toleration, as treason against his sovereign, and every doubt of Queen Elizabeth being the first of earthly potentates, as impiety to Heaven.

As he entered the cabin, the group that still crowded around Juliet separated, to permit his approach, and he knelt down beside her, examining her pulse, and watching her painful respiration, with all the attentive earnestness of pastoral charity.

“She is too delicate—far too delicate,” said he, shaking his head, as he looked at her, “to stand firmly against so rude a shock.”

“Aye, that is it, your reverence,” said widow Martin; “she is a true lady, as I say, your reverence; and where shall I find a place fit for her, poor soul, if she is long sick after her drowning?”

“The charge must not fall upon you, widow,” replied the good minister. “God forbid that I should forget my first duty at such a moment as this; if she were as coarse and homely, as she

is remarkably the reverse, still it would be my duty to succour her; and, fear not, that I shall be loth to do so."

Not one of those who still remained in the cabin, but raised their voices in a chorus of praise at the generous charity of their benevolent minister; but the good man interrupted it, by inquiring of the widow Martin, if she had found upon the person of the shipwrecked female, any article that might lead to the discovery of her rank or connexions.

"I was in too bad a hurry, please your reverence," replied the good woman, "when I tore her wet rags away from her, to note greatly what they were like, or what she had about her; but there they lies, if your reverence can find out any thing by looking at them."

One or two women, whom curiosity had brought from the village, were willing enough to assist in this examination; and though the garments of poor Juliet were lying in fragments, their texture was too costly to leave any doubt, in an age when all ranks, and in all countries,

dressed according to their station, that the wearer was a person of distinction.

“Poor lady ! she has not been used to hardship, that is easily read,” said the kind-hearted minister.

“And here, your reverence,” rejoined the widow Martin ; “here is a pretty thing she had tied about her neck with a velvet ribbon. I made free to cut the string, for it was twisted in such a fashion, that I thought it might hurt her.”

As she said this, she put into the hands of the clergyman, a large locket, splendidly set in diamonds. He immediately perceived its value ; and his compassion for the beautiful owner was increased by feeling the terrible contrast of her present situation with the wealth and luxury to which she had probably been accustomed. The thickness of the locket induced him to suppose that it contained some trinket or memorial beneath its brilliant surface ; and pressing it in different parts to find the hidden spring, it suddenly opened and discovered a gem dazzling in bright-

ness ; but, to the eyes that looked upon it, most fearfully appalling in form. It was a miniature crucifix, exquisitely carved from one entire emerald, and literally bedded in a back-ground of the finest diamonds. Had the desolate being, who lay stretched on the floor beside him, been revolting from deformity or disease—had she been branded by any mark of infamy that could most clearly have announced her criminal, still in the helpless condition to which she was reduced, the pastor of Penlynn would have deemed it his duty to help and comfort her ; but at the sight of this glittering symbol of a religion he abhorred, his very soul recoiled from her. The look of tender pity, and of almost affectionate admiration, with which he had before regarded her, was changed to one of loathing and of scorn. He hid the offending object from his sight, by hastily closing the case, and then suffering the locket to drop from his fingers upon the blanket that covered her, he turned away, saying :—

“ The woman is a papist ; to approach her is,

for one of my profession, scandal and crime. I cannot do it; nor should more be done by any, than may suffice to save her life. Nay, I know not, if even so much may not be sin. Which of us shall say that the dreadful hurricane that has wrecked the ship, was not raised by His breath, to keep the hated pestilence from our recovered land? She did not come alone.—Think not that the tempest has raged in vain.—The ways of God are not always inscrutable to his true servants; and I hear in the howling blast that is yet abroad, a voice that says; ‘For you, my people, have I done this!’—And shall I labour to undo it? When I so receive the mercy of Heaven, may it be turned into wrath against me!”

Having said these words with vehement and most sincere earnestness, he prepared to leave the hut. The widow Martin, who, in common with all the parish, did her best to hate as her pastor hated, and to think and believe on all points, exactly as he thought and believed, gradually ceased, as he spoke, the assiduous

friction of Juliet's clay-cold feet; she rose from her kneeling position, to which she had returned, after seeking the unfortunate locket; and stepping after him, hastily exclaimed:—

“For the love of God, your reverence, tell me what I am to do with her? Is it your reverence's will, that I lay her down again where I found her? Why should I be accursed, beyond all the parish, and bring the wrath of God upon me, because I went into the storm to seek for crabs?”

The corner of her apron, which was raised to her eyes, gave indication of the grief that this idea occasioned her.

“I have no warrant to command that, good woman,” replied the minister, stepping back; and, perhaps, it was some recollection of the text, whose meaning, not even the inflamed interpretation of his zeal could efface, which prevented his passing away on the other side, before he had relieved his poor parishioner of a part of her embarrassment, by putting some silver money in her hand.

“ You have done no evil, good woman ; for we walk not in darkness as steadily as in the light ; fear not that you have done evil ; nor need you fear,” he continued, casting a reluctant glance towards Juliet, “ that you shall be burdened long with one who it is the will of God should perish. I think not that yon pale idolator can live through the night ; should it prove otherwise—what I have given you, will obtain her a bed to lie on, at the Anchor. The trade of a publican forbids all distinctions. Tim Franklin must take her in.”

He once more turned towards the door of the cabin ; but as he was about to pass it, he was again stopped ; for on the threshold he encountered the goodly person of Mistress Margaret, who had graciously condescended to grant the request of the widow Martin, conveyed to her by Jack Nichols, and was come to see the drowned woman, and ascertain whether or not she was a proper object to recommend to the charitable notice of Mr. Justice Oldham and his lady. The waiting-woman stood respectfully

aside to let him pass; and, making a low courtesy, said:—

“It is ever in doing errands of charity that one is sure to meet your reverence. What sort of body is she, your reverence?”

“The body is most fair and lovely,” replied the minister; “but,” shaking his head sorrowfully, “she is one of the idolators whom it is our duty to eschew, even while we pray for their conversion; the wretched creature is a papist, Mistress Margaret.”

“A papist, your reverence?” ejaculated the charitable functionary, stepping back, and collecting her clothes closely round her, as if fearing to come in contact with some impurity. “What a blessing it is, I did not ask madam to come down with me! You know, your reverence, how fond she is of seeing all that’s new and strange; but mercy on me! his worship would never have forgiven me, if I had beguiled her to come within reach of a papist.”

“You had better not enter, young woman,” said the divine, perceiving, while she spoke, that

her eyes had found their way into the cottage before her, and expressed a considerable degree of curiosity to examine further. "You had better not enter—you can do no good—and his worship would not think the better of you for seeing her, nor of me for letting you do it. So turn back, Mistress Margaret, and tell your lady, that I have already done what is needful."

It is possible that Mistress Margaret might have preferred reporting the result of her own personal investigation; but to express any such wish, after what the minister had said, was quite out of the question: so taking leave of widow Martin; by a slight nod, and—"I wish you well rid of her, good woman," she turned her steps back again the way she came.

Our poor Juliet, meanwhile, lay perfectly unconscious of what was passing round her; she was not insensible, but a strong fever had already seized upon her; her head ached intolerably, and there was a general confusion in her sensations which left her no other distinct conscious-

ness, but that she was in pain. Many people had entered the cabin from curiosity, or interest in the fate of the person, to save whom the most popular man amongst them had hazarded his life; but they had crept off one by one, as the minister had proceeded to express his opinions respecting her, and poor widow Martin found herself left with her unwelcome guest, and one old crone, who still stood silently gazing upon her.

“What on earth am I to do now, mother Dawkins,” exclaimed she, as the minister closed the door behind him; “What in God’s name am I to do with her?—true enough,” she continued, looking at her hand which still contained the silver, “here is a matter of half a mark,—and a goodly sum it is for such as me to hold in my hand,—but I don’t see how even that can help me; how am I to get her up to Tim Franklin’s?”

“And who shall say how she’ll be treated there, if you do get her up?” replied the old woman, bending with difficulty to reach the

hand of Juliet :—" Poor soul ! her hand burns like a coal of fire. Go and ask, since it is the minister's will, go and ask if Tim can send to fetch her, and I will bide the while and watch her."

Relieved by the suggestion, the poor woman wrapped her cloak about her, and hastened to obey it, while the person she had left to watch Juliet, drew near to her, with feelings widely different from those evinced by all who had left her. Her first act was to kneel upon the floor, and pick up the unfortunate trinket, which poor Juliet's reverence for the memory of a mother she never knew, had induced her to retain constantly in her bosom, though her mind had long ceased to cling to it as an object of religious observance. The old woman had either narrowly watched the manner in which the minister had opened it, or she had been previously familiar with some similar contrivance, for she now caused it to uncloset without difficulty, and having gazed upon it for a moment, she placed it on a stool which stood near, and turning towards it on her

bended knees, raised her withered hands to Heaven in silent prayer, then breaking forth aloud, she said :—

“ Mary ! blessed mother of Jesus, receive my weary soul in heaven, if I keep my vow ! Spurn me for ever and for ever, let your son spit upon me ; let the saints thrust me forth, and the martyrs turn their backs upon me, if I do not succour, comfort, and protect this blessed lady ! Blessed she is, and must be, or the Virgin Mother of God would not have borne her up upon the waves, even when the arm of my bold Cuthbert could not reach her ! Blessed she is, and must be ! ”

Then closing the case of the crucifix, her first care was to disentangle the string by which it had been suspended ; but in removing it from her neck, the poor widow in her haste and terror had cut it in more than one part, so that it was no longer capable of being restored to its office. Finding this to be the case, mother Dawkins took possession of a piece of string which hung from the wall, having once suspended some of

the small housewifery treasures of the poor widow, and passing it through the jewelled ring of the locket, she again secured it around the neck of the unconscious Juliet.

Having performed this office, which she considered as infinitely more important towards assuring the welfare of the patient, than all else that could be done for her, she employed herself in examining the clothes which had been torn off her, to ascertain if any thing were left that might form a garment more befitting her to wear than any she or her neighbours could be able to furnish; and the old woman had just convinced herself that by a little ingenuity much might be done with the fragments, when the widow Martin returned from her visit to the landlord of the Anchor.

“He won’t hear a word of it, not he,” she exclaimed, as she entered; “no papist nor dying woman shall darken his doors. So says Tim Franklin; and he holds to it, though I offered him more than half the money the

minister gave me. What can I do now, mother Dawkins ?”

“ You have your boy to rest with you on that straw pallet, neighbour,” replied the old woman ; “ and I have no one to share mine ; so if you will let your Jem here, who is just coming back when he is wanted, if you will let him, I say, run over to the station yonder, and tell any two of the fishermen that he may happen to find, that mother Dawkins wants them, they will come to me ; and if you will lend your blanket, they shall carry her to my hut ; and I will do the best I can for her, be she papist or—heretic.”

The last word was not so pronounced as to reach the ears of the widow ; who was quite old enough to remember what it meant, when those who uttered it as the bitterest abuse were of the powers that be. Now, none within the parish of Penlynn but mother Dawkins and her sister’s orphan son, Cuthbert, ever breathed such a sound ; and they only ventured to do it in

secret, and when none but each other could hear it.

Though mother Dawkins had the reputation among some of her neighbours of being a witch and a sorceress, the widow hesitated not to accept her friendly offer. Jem was again dispatched, and speedily returned with two stout Cornish men, who placing considerable faith in the good or ill will of mother Dawkins towards them and their boats, had obeyed her summons, as she predicted, at a moment's warning.

“Now then,” said the old woman, “let us do our best to move her easy, poor soul. You must lend us the rug too, widow Martin, and ’tis by that they must carry her.”

“And who will pay me for another, if this is torn, as ’tis like enough to be—but take it, take it—there’s no help for it, I know.”

Juliet had sunk into a sort of heavy slumber, and hardly opened her eyes when the women approached to arrange the blanket round her. All that the extreme poverty of the poor widow could enable her to supply, was freely lent, to

assist in making the poor sufferer as comfortable as might be,—though she could not refrain, as she wrapped a decent kerchief, the relic of better days, round her head, from saying,—“ She must have it, poor wretch—but ’tis pity to put it on a papist.”

Mother Dawkins promised faithfully to restore every thing, provided that the widow would let her have half the money furnished by the minister, and all the fragments of the poor stranger’s dress which remained.

These requisitions were too reasonable to be refused ; and the important preliminaries being settled, the men who were to convey the patient stepped forward, and raising her between them, carried her as gently as foot could fall, to the miserable shelter of her new friend’s cabin.

Juliet, though she felt the movement, and moaned slightly, from the inconvenience it occasioned her, was still quite unconscious of all that was passing ; and happy was it for her that she remained so, till returning strength enabled her to endure the returning con-

sciousness, which disclosed to her the whole wretchedness of her most forlorn condition. That she became at length fully aware of all her misery, and yet lived to bear it, proved that her constitution was as strong to endure, as her mind was susceptible of feeling suffering. Yet even amidst all the desolation of her bereaved condition, she had still much kindness to be thankful for.—The brave young man, who had so dauntlessly, though in vain, hazarded his life in the hope of preserving her, was as zealous in promoting her recovery, and contributing to her comfort—if the best that could be done for her, under such circumstances, could deserve the name—as his pious aunt, who had a vow in heaven to bind her to it.

For three long weeks Juliet languished through all the suffering stages of a violent fever, and, during that time, the young Cuthbert saved one half of his daily earnings to enable him to assist his aunt in providing what their simple skill thought best for her. The old woman was an excellent nurse ; and it was as much to her

extraordinary knowledge of simples, as to a remarkable twist in her back, or even to her never going to church, that her character for witchcraft was owing. Had Juliet been attended by all the faculty, she could not have passed more safely through the different stages of her complaint, than she did under the care of mother Dawkins ; nor could health have more steadily persisted in revisiting her, had her bed of straw been changed for one of down, or the black rafters of the wretched hovel, where she lay, been metamorphosed into a chamber as lofty and as stately as that wherein she was born. As the powers of her memory returned, and as she recalled the terrible events that had rendered her thus strangely desolate, a hope took possession of her bosom, which, perhaps, contributed as much as mother Dawkins's science, to the perfect restoration of her health. It was not immediately, even after the stupor and delirium of fever had left her, that she was able to recall all the circumstances of the separation from her friends ; but when at length she did so, when

she remembered that she had seen them leave the ship in a boat, which, though far from secure, was at least infinitely more so than the means by which she had herself been saved, she felt that there was still a hope that she should recover them. As her strength increased, she related all these particulars to Cuthbert, and he promised to make such inquiries along the coast as should speedily confirm her hopes, or show that they must be abandoned for ever.

Of the six long weeks which Juliet passed in this miserable hovel, the one during which Cuthbert was absent upon this inquiry, was incomparably the most wretched. His stay was greatly lengthened by having followed a wrong direction at setting out; and so many wrecks had been thrown upon the coast during the late storm, that it was not easy to particularize the one, to which his inquiries referred.

At length, however, he not only succeeded in discovering the quarter from whom intelligence respecting the friends of Juliet might be ob-

tained; but found it of such a sort, that every mile from Combe Ireford to Penlynn seemed three to the friendly Cuthbert, so anxious was he to communicate them to the fair stranger. He had been absent upon this expedition during six days; and, by his own account, when he set forth, it was not likely to occupy more than three at the very furthest. So that Juliet, having drooped on the fourth day, with the pining sickness of delayed hope, and dragged through the fifth, with the hourly increasing terror of anticipated despair, was, on the afternoon of the sixth, which was the period of Cuthbert's return, seated at the door of the hut, the very image of woe. A high-backed stuffed chair, the envy of every old woman in Penlynn, which had been for many a year the pride and comfort of mother Dawkins, was now appropriated to poor Juliet. It had been drawn by the old woman to the door, because the November sun shone with unusual brightness, and she thought its rays, which she felt to be so cheering to herself, might

cheer too the pale girl, who looked, and perhaps felt, as if she regretted the grave she had seen so near her.

In this chair Juliet was seated; the red Cornish cloak, of historical renown, wrapped round her, her long dark hair hanging neglected upon her shoulders, and her heavy eyes fixed in mournful meditation upon the sea, when Cuthbert suddenly appeared before her, having descended from the cliff by a path immediately behind the cabin.

It is impossible, by the slow drawling medium of words, to convey any idea of the electric touch which Juliet felt through every fibre of her frame, as she caught the first bright glance of Cuthbert's eye. The moment he saw her, he took off his hat, and waved it over his head. It was well for Juliet's impatience, that his look and action were such as must have spoken of joy, to every nation of the earth; for Cuthbert's English was not very intelligible to Juliet, and it often required a multitude of questions, and much

paraphrastic explanation, before either could fully catch the meaning of the other.

“ Oh dio !” exclaimed Juliet, rising and stretching out her arm towards him, “ sono salvi !”

“ Safe and sound ! safe and sound ! every soul of them,” shouted Cuthbert.”

“ Gently, gently, boy,” cried the old woman, who had also seen him approach, and ran hastening forward, to see that her patient tried not her new strength too severely ; “ why Juliet, girl, you be not crying now ? don’t you understand him, sweet heart ? safe and sound, deary, all safe and sound. Come, come, I must not let you be out, if you totter this fashion.”

Juliet, indeed, could hardly stand ; she caught the old woman’s arm, and turned back towards the chair she had quitted, mother Dawkins continuing, all the while, to reiterate her comfort and her cautions, till, having reached her seat, she dropped on her knees before it, and offered up a silent thanksgiving for the blessed tidings she had received.

The old woman and her nephew stood by with silent reverence, as she performed this act of gratitude, and both crossed themselves with a feeling of the truest sympathy.

“ Show me a heretic that will do as much,” said the old woman, as she assisted Juliet to rise, “ ’tis a pleasure and a blessing to serve one of the true faith, but before you ask a question, or hear a word, pretty one, you must take a sip of my comforting tincture.”

Juliet seated herself without speaking, but the sweet and grateful smile with which she took the offered refreshment, made itself perfectly understood by her kind nurse.

Cuthbert then proceeded to narrate his adventures; his frequent disappointments, and his almost abandoned hopes, were recounted at greater length, than it is necessary to repeat; and the substance of that part of his story, which restored Juliet, amidst want and penury, to health, strength, and joy unspeakable, may be given in a few words.

Such a boat as Juliet had described to him,

with one female among her crew, came safely to land, at the distance of five miles from Penlynn.

There was a gentleman on board her, who appeared very ill, but he knew a noble lord in the neighbourhood, and had remained, together with the woman and a little boy, at his mansion for several days. During this time, the most active inquiries had been set on foot by them, respecting the wreck; but all the news they got, according to the report of the servants, was that every soul in the ship had perished. This was unhappily the case with more than one vessel driven upon the coast during the storm.

After hearing this sad news, which Cuthbert declared had, by what he could learn, gone near to drive them mad, the gentleman and lady, and the little boy, set off in very grand style, but where they were gone, he could not learn.

Who cannot imagine, better far than I can tell them, the feelings with which Juliet listened to this narrative? who cannot conceive the crowd of delightful thoughts and images that thronged

her fancy?—and yet, though her misery was over, her difficulties were not. How was she to convey herself to the house of her uncle? By what possible means could she traverse so many weary miles, (for the mansion of Lord Arlborough was in Monmouthshire), without money, and with hardly clothes sufficient to cover her? And yet, strange to say, the first result of her meditation upon this journey, and her means of making it—was a laugh: Hope and health, incomparably the most precious gifts of Heaven, had long been strangers to her, and though latterly she felt some wavering and uncertain indications of their return, the last few days, by again withdrawing one, had rendered the other valueless and unheeded; but now she felt their united influence on every object she looked upon, and the prospect of privation, hardship and fatigue, seemed but a jest, while the happiness she anticipated, shone so brightly beyond it. When the question of ways and means, however, came to be discussed, mother Dawkins's matter-of-fact statements of the difficulties before her were

enough to damp any ardour, less energetic than her own.

Poor Juliet had given all her wealth to purchase freedom, but she well knew that she might safely promise payment beyond their utmost hopes, to her poor friends, if they could devise the means of reaching Arlborough Castle. Neither mother Dawkins nor Cuthbert doubted for an instant the truth of her promises, but how to deserve their fulfilment was the difficulty.

“Could we but get to Exeter, Cuthbert,” said the old woman; “could we get a sight of our good Father Clifford, poor and persecuted as he doubtless is, in these hard times, I think he would do much to help us.”

“Doubt it not,” replied her nephew; “I am sure he would do much—and enough too for that matter, for Catholic gentlemen, bad as they’re off, are not obliged to be so much ashamed of the Pope as a Catholic fisherman. But as you say, mother, how are we to get to Exeter? unless,” he continued, almost in a whisper, and with the air of one who is touch-

ing on a very delicate subject; “unless our pretty mistress Juliet would consent to go in Stephen Ford’s fishing-smack to Topsham?”

Juliet, who was listening with the most eager attention to what they said, perfectly understood the proposal of Cuthbert, and the delicate colour of her cheek faded in a moment.

“The sea! oh, not the sea!” she exclaimed, piteously.

“I thought so,” rejoined Cuthbert; “I was sure she could not abide the idea of it—and yet, what we are to do for her without it, is far more than I am capable to say.”

After this day, Juliet rapidly recovered her strength, but her impatience increased faster still, and at the end of three days she gravely informed mother Dawkins that she felt perfectly able to undertake the journey to Exeter on foot, if Cuthbert would attend her; at the same time, repeating her assurance that his time and trouble should be paid for, as far as money could repay such kindness.

The aunt and nephew exchanged looks together, and both shook their heads.

“ Lord love the child !” said the old woman ;
“ it would be just as possible for me to be made a saint, as for you to walk to Exeter.—No, not even at the very top of your strength could you have done it : but now !—don’t talk of it, dear, —’tis but folly.”

“ What can I do ?” said Juliet, despondingly ;
“ you tell me there is no mode of riding.”

“ None that I could get for you, my poor girl,” replied the old woman.

Juliet lay down on her hard pallet, with this discouraging assurance ringing in her ears ; and before she slept, her resolution was taken to embark with Cuthbert on board the fishing-vessel he had mentioned. As soon as she had once decided upon making this effort, she became reconciled to it, and wondered that she could for a moment have suffered any personal fear to impede her efforts for regaining the friends she had lost so long.

When she declared her resolution on the following morning, Cuthbert uttered an exclamation of delight:—

“That’s a fine girl! I love your spirit, mistress Juliet, and I’ll engage for it, you shall be rewarded with as pretty a run, as ever boat made; the moon’s just right for it, the winds are blown by for one while, and Stephen Ford’s boat is fit for a queen, aye, if it was our holy queen Mary herself.”

The preparations of Juliet were soon made; that which took her longest, was a visit of grateful feeling to the widow Martin. This poor woman had watched her recovery with much interest, though at a distance, and not all her veneration for the minister, nor her hatred to the Pope, could prevent her looking at the beautiful creature she had preserved, with very sensible pleasure.

It was very new, and very painful to Juliet, after receiving such services, to be obliged to say farewell, without leaving any token of the gratitude she felt; and it would have been more

painful still, had she been less sure, that should she live to reach Arlborough, the debt would not long remain unpaid.

Mother Dawkins, at the moment of parting with her, hung a little tin box, containing a bit of the toe nail of St. Dunstan, round her neck, by the same string as still suspended the sacred locket which had been the original bond of their union; and as she did so, she kissed her forehead with a degree of tender affection, which her hard exterior gave no promise of.

The weather was all that Cuthbert prophesied; the little voyage was not retarded by a single accident; but a sad disappointment awaited them at Exeter, for the Catholic priest, who was to make every thing easy, was no where to be found. It was completely by accident that in this extremity of distress, from the want of means to prosecute a journey upon which her very life depended, Juliet recollected the value of the jewel which was suspended to her neck. As a relic of her unknown mother, she had ever considered this locket as almost sacred, and she

determined, if possible, to avoid parting with it for ever, by leaving it in the hand of some respectable jeweller, who would consent to lend her a small sum of money upon it.

This business she determined to execute herself, and taking the arm of her faithful attendant, she sought and found such a shop as she wanted. The jeweller's start of astonishment, as the rich trinket was opened before him, and the stare of curiosity which she had to encounter afterwards, brought a bright flush into the cheeks of Juliet. The man hesitated for a moment, before he answered her request for a loan upon it—and then he said—

“ From what country are you, young lady ?”

“ The setting is Italian, sir,” replied Juliet.

Again the man looked earnestly at her, and it might be that he thought there was some mystery about it, which ought to be explained—but if this were so, the wisdom of a second thought told him, that his own interest ought to supersede all other considerations in the estimation of a reasonable tradesman, and after another

moment's thought, he told out on the counter before her, the sum she had asked for, together with an acknowledgment of having received the trinket therein described.

Need we now follow Juliet, step by step, to Monmouthshire? Need we say that she purchased for Cuthbert and herself more decent clothing, (though less suitable in its homely fabric to her rank, than to his), than either had ever possessed at Penlynn? Or may we place her at once, in her duffle gown, and clean white pinnars, before the gates of her noble kinsman?

CHAPTER XLII.

My plenteous joys, wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves in drops of sorrow.

SHAKSPEARE.

JULIET arrived at the stately mansion of her maternal ancestors, mounted upon a pillion, behind the faithful Cuthbert; and though this spectacle was not likely to produce, in those days, exactly the same effect as it might do in our own, it was such, joined to the humble garb of the travellers, as to induce the porter at the park lodge to indicate the road which led to the offices, as that which they were to pursue.

The agitation of Juliet, during these last moments of expectation, was painfully violent. Were Hubert and Geraldine indeed there?

Should she once more hear the dear sound of their voices, read the expression of tender fondness in their eyes, and again feel that, instead of being the most desolate and forlorn of wanderers, she was welcomed, cherished, and beloved !

The path they had been directed to take, led them into the court-yard of the castle. The trembling tones of Juliet, as she inquired of one of the grooms employed there, for lady Geraldine d'Albano, were completely drowned by the loud barking of sundry dogs, who evidently made part of the establishment.

“ Who is it you want, friend ?” bawled one of the men, taking hold of the bridle, and addressing himself to Cuthbert.

“ Nay, you must ask mistress Juliet,” he replied ; “ ’tis hardly likely, that such as I should have kin or kind here.”

The groom stepped on towards Juliet :—

“ Who do you seek for, mistress ?” he repeated.

“ Is the lady Geraldine d'Albano here ?” she said, with a strong effort to speak distinctly.

In this, perhaps, she did not well succeed, and her strong foreign accent would have rendered her words almost unintelligible if she had. But in the present case, this rather assisted than impeded her object, for the man replied :—

“ I understand—you’re from foreign parts—you had best dismount, and I’ll call our steward to speak to you.”

Cuthbert, glad enough to quit his horse, of whose trot he had had something more than enough, immediately obeyed, and assisting Juliet to descend from her pillion, placed her upon a stone bench beside the door. Her heart swelled almost to bursting at this delay—but there was no help for it. In a few minutes, a stately personage, dressed in deep mourning, came from the house, and addressed her :—

“ What is your business, young woman ?”

“ Lady Geraldine—” faltered poor Juliet, utterly incapable of pronouncing another word.

“ The lady Geraldine ?” replied the pompous steward ; “ I doubt not, young woman, that you may be from her country, and she may perhaps

consent to see you—but it is needful that I should inform her of your name—who shall I say desires to see her ladyship?”

“No, no, no,” cried Juliet, rising, “I cannot, will not wait—lead me to her now—instantly—” There was a good deal of authority, as well as emotion in the manner of her speaking, and the man looked rather puzzled as well as offended; but whether he would have waived his etiquette in favour of her impatience, was still doubtful, when a damsel, also dressed in deep mourning, whom curiosity had drawn to the door, seized the arm of Juliet, exclaiming:—

“Come with me, come with me—my life to a straw—” and the lively hand-maid drew Juliet after her, leaving the slow-moving steward, and many other domestics who had been looking on, to guess as they could what “that bold-faced Alice could mean.”

All Juliet’s remaining strength was willingly put forth to follow her light-footed guide, who led her up to a flight of steps, through a lofty hall, into a spacious library, at the farther end of

which was a door. Here the girl stopped, and knocked. Juliet heard no sound in answer, but the door was opened, and she saw several figures in black. A female from amongst them caught her eye; she staggered forward into the room, and stretching out her arms towards her exclaimed :—
“ Mia Zia !”

Her strength then totally failed her, and she fell almost prostrate on the ground.

The group, who rushed towards her, consisted of Lord Arlborough, his niece, and his son. Juliet had not lost her senses, and though sobbing, breathless, and bewildered, she tasted the full tide of joy that rushed upon her. Fond arms were twined around her—her pale cheeks and lips were pressed by tender kisses—her loved name was uttered again and again, in all the accents that could best speak love, and she felt and heard it all in the fulness of extacy, but without attempting to move or to speak in reply.

Though fatigue and recent illness had so much weakened Juliet, that it was she who seemed to sink under the strong emotion of that happy,

but trying hour, the tumult in the hearts of Geraldine and Hubert was more wild and overwhelming than any thing she could feel; for she had been occupied for weeks in anticipating the delicious scene that was now before her—but they had mourned her as for ever lost, and the tremendous revulsion of feeling that now swelled their hearts to bursting, was almost stronger than the reason of either of them could bear. The emotion of Lord Arlborough could not be such as theirs, but it was mixed with a sentiment in which neither of them could share. Such, he remembered, was the face and form, such the age of his beloved sister, when forty years before she had quitted that house to follow her husband to Italy. A thousand mingled recollections of all that she then had been, of her loveliness, her gentle goodness, her dreadful fate—came fresh upon his heart; and the old man, as he stood apart, gazing on the face of Juliet, wept like a child.

To follow the happy party, now re-united for ever, through all the delightful gradations from

extacy too great to bear without suffering, to the quiet assurance of really possessing all they wished on earth, would exceed the short space now left me. It was, however, before they had reached this state of calm and reasonable happiness, that a circumstance occurred, which, for old acquaintance sake, must not be omitted.

Beyond the saloon in which the scene above described took place, was another apartment, in which sat poor Morgante, who, for his faithful love of her they had deemed lost for ever, was treated by Geraldine and Hubert, rather as a child of their house, than as a servant.

In this room the little page was placed, for the performance of some slight task that had been given, in the hope of amusing him; for in truth he mourned his mistress with no common sorrow. His wonted gaiety had quite forsaken him, and he crept about, not like the spirit—but the spirit-forsaken likeness—of his former self. Juliet had been raised in the arms of Hubert, and placed upon a couch, he was kneeling at her feet, with his arms folded round her, and

Geraldine was sitting at her side, with the fair cheek of her niece, now dimpling into smiles, and warm with blushes, resting on her shoulder; while Lord Arlborough still stood at a short distance, gazing at them with emotions, which were already softening into happiness.

It was at this moment that the door opened, and Morgante entered the room. He, too, was clad in the deepest mourning, and his heavy eye expressed more inward sympathy with his suit of solemn black, than is often seen at his age.

He paused on the threshold, on perceiving that another person was added to the group he had left—he looked towards them—for one short moment he seemed stupified, and then, uttering a scream, whose joyful note it was delightful to hear, he rushed past the venerable Earl, and dropping on his knees beside Lord Hubert, sobbed out:—

“ Oh, padrona mia! padrona mia! siete voi ancor in vita!”

Juliet kissed his forehead with sincere affec-

tion, and crowned his delight by telling him that she had wept for joy, upon hearing him described as one of those who came safely to shore in the boat.

Morgante would willingly have kissed the hand of his mistress in testimony of his gratitude—but he could not find even a finger, that was not enclosed in the grasp of affection; he, therefore, contented himself by bestowing the salutation on the hem of her duffle robe, and then springing on his feet, he ran out of the room.

Though he was well-beloved by them all, they were at this moment hardly conscious that he had left them—but ten minutes afterwards their attention was called to him by his reappearance in the saloon, clothed in the faded remnants of the coloured dress, which he had worn when escaping from the wreck. As the gaiety of this fanciful garb had suffered from repeated marine sprinklings, Morgante, to repair the loss of its original colours, had coaxed Alice to bestow sundry knots of bright ribbon,

with which, by her help, he had decorated his person.

The effect of this childish testimony of glee was most happy upon the spirits of the whole party. Lord Hubert rose from his kneeling position, which he had still retained, at the feet of Juliet, and catching the boy in his arms, he lifted him high above his head, exclaiming:—

“By heaven, Morgante is the only one among us, who testifies that his reasoning faculties have not been disturbed by this blessed miracle.—There is my dear philosophical father, with tears still wet upon his cheek.—There is my cousin Geraldine, with her eyes rivetted on her recovered treasure, as if she were keeping guard, lest any one should attempt to snatch her away again.—Then there is Juliet herself,” he continued, setting the page on his feet, and again approaching her, “looking like a rainbow in a shower, or a lily on a dewy morning; or any other pretty thing made up of smiles and tears—while I—and all of you, still peaceably endure this ghastly black,—fie on it, Geraldine,

is it thus we welcome her—I, for one, will follow the boy's lesson."

Hubert tore the weepers from his wrist, as he spoke, and was hastening out of the room, to rid himself of his hateful garb, when some idea seemed to cross his mind, which induced him to request Lady Geraldine would permit his speaking to her alone, for a single moment.

"Unreasonable!" she exclaimed, yet she immediately rose, and followed him out of the room.

Their conference was short, but on returning, they found that Lord Arlborough had taken the vacant seat beside Juliet, on the couch, and was speaking to her with a countenance that showed strong emotion:—

"My dearest father," exclaimed the young man, "you are engaged exactly as I would most wish to see you—and yet—I do humbly beg and intreat that you will retire with me for a short space."

"Unreasonable!" said Lord Arlborough, gaily repeating the exclamation of his niece, but he

too, yielded to the summons, and left the room with his son.

The horse which had carried Cuthbert and Juliet all the way from Exeter, spite of the easy stages by which they had found it necessary to proceed, knocked up completely, the night before they reached their journey's end, and at the distance of only ten miles from the castle. It was, therefore, at an early hour of the forenoon that they arrived; and before twelve, which was that of dinner, every appearance of mourning had already disappeared from the persons, as well as from the hearts, of the rejoicing household. Moreover, before they sat down to table, the noble owner of the mansion had found time to express, to the astonished Cuthbert, his sense of the obligation he had conferred on his family. Though far from insensible to the pleasure of answering the innumerable questions of the servants, respecting the perilous adventures of Juliet, and much interested by hearing in return their statements respecting the rank and consequence of the person he had saved,

Cuthbert was too impatient to display the incredible amount of the reward he had received, for his aunt, for himself, and for the widow Martin, to continue at Arlborough an hour longer than was necessary to refresh his horse. Accordingly, he set out on his return immediately after the noon-day meal, bearing with him the thanks and blessings of the whole family, and such a sum of money to boot, as completely overturned the crab trade of widow Martin, making her and her boy the owners of a boat, and general merchants of fish, as heretofore : while it caused mother Dawkins to leave her hut at Penlynn, for a comfortable lodging at Exeter, in the house of a discreet and secret professor, of what she ever denominated the true faith. As to Cuthbert himself, he became captain of a vessel, as beautiful as that which had conveyed him and his fair companion from Penlynn to Topsham ; he called her THE JULIET, and his luck with her was so great, that before the end of three years there were no less than six ship Juliets employed upon the western coast of England.

But this is a long digression, and we must return to record what befel Juliet on the first day of her arrival at Arlborough, for the history of that day is not yet concluded.

As soon as this noble family had seen Cuthbert depart, Lord Hubert proposed to his father, and his cousin Geraldine, that they should take Juliet a short walk, to a part of the grounds which he particularly wished her to see. They readily assented, and were leading her forward, when she stopped, and said, laughingly, to Lord Hubert:—

“As to your taking me to see some more of the beauties of your beautiful park—I shall like it well—but I hope you will take care that nobody sees me, till my *fairy godmother* here has furnished me with garments rather more suitable to your party.”

“Geraldine will speedily take care of all that, depend upon it,” replied Lord Hubert, who having in his secret conferences with his father and Geraldine, arranged an excursion which he was anxious should take place, was determined

not to be disappointed.—“ In the mean time, do not fear that you should be seen, Juliet.—By the way, cousin Geraldine, she does not look so much amiss in this little brown jacket, as one might have expected !”

Before they left the terraced garden, where this passed, Lord Hubert called Morgante from the house to follow them, and thus attended, they set forth upon their walk. The path they chose, led through a grove of oaks, which, though now entirely leafless, were still beautiful, from their majestic size, and the fine turf, which the deer kept so closely shorn beneath them. At the distance of half a mile from the castle, they came in sight of a small gothic lodge, which, though humble in its dimensions, when compared to the noble castle to which it seemed an appendage, had, nevertheless, the appearance of being the residence of a gentleman. Lord Hubert approached the gate, and opened it for them to pass through :—

“ You surely are not taking me to make a visit ?” said Juliet, drawing back.

“Certainly, not a visit of ceremony, Juliet,” replied her aunt; “we shall only call here for a moment, to inquire for the health of a young child.”

Juliet’s reluctance to appear was not strong enough to make her say any more on the subject, and she followed her aunt into the house, the door of which yielded, with the ease of rustic confidence, to the hand of Lord Hubert. No servant appeared to announce them, neither did they seem to wish for any. Geraldine still led the way, and entered a handsome parlour, in which a bright fire was burning on the hearth—near it stood a table, on which lay a rich velvet cushion, and rolling upon it, with hands and feet all catching and springing together, with the delight of being played with, was a lovely infant, apparently about three or four months’ old. On one side of him stood a tall elegant looking man, gazing on the boy with all the delighted pride of a young father.—On the other, with her arm thrown over the cushion, to prevent the possibility of an accident from the sport, was seated a lady of uncommon beauty. Her fea-

tures were large, but exquisitely regular, and the full dark eyes she raised upon them, as they entered, had a rich and brilliant lustre, which more than atoned for the dark hue of her complexion.

She rose from her seat to welcome them, but ere she had made a second step in advance, she stopped, and, fixing her eyes upon Juliet, the brightest flush rushed to her neck and cheeks that ever warmed an olive tintured skin into perfect beauty. “Can it—oh, can it be herself?” she cried, still immoveably gazing upon her. There was something in the voice which struck the heart of Juliet, but the person of the beautiful woman before them was totally unknown to her; and she turned to Geraldine for the explanation of a scene so entirely unintelligible.

“Juliet d’Albano!” again exclaimed the stranger, “do not you know the creature you saved?—have you quite forgotten Camilla?”

“Camilla!” echoed Juliet, “Camilla! can you be my thin and pale Camilla?—and is this

little angel your child, Camilla?—Oh, I am too happy!——”

It is unnecessary to trace the voyage of Camilla to England. Her child was born on board the vessel that conveyed her thither, and her Jacintha proved worthy of all the confidence with which this foster-child had rested upon her. They were received by Lord Arlborough with the hospitable kindness that Geraldine had asked for them; and by the active exertions of young Corri, the Count di Mondello was soon informed of the happiness that awaited him. His gratitude towards Juliet may, perhaps, be conceived. He seemed to look upon her as something above humanity; and when he took his boy in his arms, and bent his knee, as he presented it to the agitated but happy girl, there was such a mixture of grace and truth in the action, that it would have required a hard heart not to have been touched by it.

Jacintha entered while her nursling was still in the lap of Juliet, and when they explained to her who it was who held the lovely babe, she

withdrew her arms, which were stretched out to take it, saying, “It is your’s too—it is your own, sweet lady, as much as if you were the mother of it. God grant I may live to see you rewarded for the deed that saved its precious life, by having as lovely a one of your own !”

The blushing Juliet laid the child on the knees of its mother, while Lord Hubert exclaimed, laughing, “How well Jacintha prays, —Father Laurence was nothing to her.”

It would be difficult to imagine a happier party of friends, than that formed by the inhabitants of Arlborough castle and Arlborough lodge. Hope for the future, remembrance of the past, present enjoyment, and former suffering, all united to knit them together, by ties as delightful as they were enduring.—Geraldine and Lord Hubert had the satisfaction of seeing Juliet become every day more dear to Lord Arlborough, and her attachment to him soon became all that her affectionate heart had longed to feel for her father.

No two people could be less alike, certainly,

than the Earl of Arlborough and the Count d'Albano. The English nobleman was tall and athletic in person, with a countenance embellished by no regularity of features, but manly, noble, and expressive. He possessed an intellect of the highest order, and the tone of his mind and temper strictly deserved the epithet of philosophical. His disposition was frank, generous, and confiding, and his pride, if the lofty feeling which made him shun companionship with ignorance, vice, or vulgarity, must be so denominated, could never have been felt as offensive by the lowest of God's creatures, unless they affected to be something they were not. The Italian Count has already been sufficiently described; but his diminutive person, and still more diminutive mind, formed a most remarkable contrast to those of the English earl.

The enjoyment of Geraldine, in the conversation of such a man as Lord Arlborough, would have been very great, even had he been a stranger to her blood, and not registered in her memory as the beloved brother of her mother—

and to Juliet it afforded a pleasure not only new, but perfectly unexpected. She had no notion that the father of her lover, at the advanced age of three-score years and ten, could have aroused her faculties, awakened her ambition, and stimulated her industry, solely from the hope of becoming more deserving of the valuable privilege of his conversation. It seemed hardly possible that such a state of things could admit of improvement, but Lord Hubert thought otherwise, and after allowing a few weeks to the perfect restoration of her health, the enlivening of her spirits, and the establishing her firmly in the affection of his father, he ventured to tell Juliet, that he had been consulting with her aunt, respecting the day that should be fixed on for their marriage.

“The English ladies do not marry till they are nineteen—or eighteen, at the least, Hubert—I am an English woman now, and I must follow their customs.”

“Of course, Juliet, if you insist upon it, you must be the person to fix the day that shall make

you for ever mine—but I had fancied that, perhaps, you might like to oblige my father in this matter.”

“Your father, Hubert?—you know—you know so perfectly well, that I should never refuse any thing on earth that he could ask me!”

“Thank Heaven!—Then this day month Juliet will be my wife!”

“How wildly you talk!—this day month!—What do you think my aunt would say to such nonsense?”

“I told you, Juliet, that I had already spoken to her on the subject—had I not—I should hardly have dared ——” Juliet turned her head aside to conceal the smile which this new-born timidity in her very saucy cousin produced, and he continued:—“My cousin Geraldine says, that she knows you well enough to be quite certain that you would not refuse to comply with the wish of my father, that our marriage should be solemnized on his birth-day.”

“His birth-day!” exclaimed Juliet, with con-

siderable emotion; “and pray, my Lord Hubert,” she continued, “who was it put it into her head, that such very indecorous haste could be possible? Yet I should like very much to be married on his birth-day; and I will agree that so it shall be—next year.”

Lord Hubert did not reply, but giving her a reproachful, though half-laughing glance, left the room. Before she could quite decide what he meant by this, he re-entered, accompanied by Lord Arlborough.

“Juliet, my love,” said the old man, sitting down beside her; “do you remember our conversation of last night, on the nature of true wisdom?”

“Yes, my dear lord,” she replied; “I have not forgotten a word you said.”

“Are you sure of that?”

“Indeed I am.”

“Then you remember my saying, and you all agreed with me, that there was no difference between man and man so great, as that which leads

one to seize upon, cherish, and enjoy, to the utmost, every accident of his destiny which appears favourable to happiness; while another churlishly looks at it, doubts of it, and either finally throws it aside as worthless, or else delays to profit by it, till the circumstances which made it a blessing have changed, and the remembrance only remains to swell his magazine of sorrows and regrets."

"I not only remember the remark, my dear uncle; but I am very sure that I shall remember it for ever."

"Do you think the observation a just one?"

"Indeed I do."

"Then why, Juliet, do you talk of postponing till I may be no more, an event that would, I am sure, be always remembered with more pleasure if I witnessed it?"

Wholly conquered, Juliet rose from her chair, and bending her knee before him, she replied: — "As you will—how you will—when you will, my beloved uncle. That you

should witness, and bless my union with Lord Hubert, is the first and dearest wish of my heart."

Though bridal suits, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, were not constructed with the easy rapidity with which they are manufactured at present, the preparations for Juliet's nuptials were sufficiently splendid to have satisfied any lady, of any age.

The Countess di Mondello was the main spring of a thousand pretty fancies, by which the happy day was decorated; and the union of the cousins furnished a subject of discussion and admiration, not only to the town of Arlborough, but to all the fair county of Monmouth, far and near.

There was much of happiness, much of heart-felt hilarity, in the festivity which attended this splendid union; but the delicious calm, that followed after the ten days of public rejoicing were over, was better still.

The winter passed away; a summer of peace and hope followed, and, on the first day of No-

vember, a joy more perfect yet was granted, by Juliet's becoming the mother of a lovely boy.

The past lives of Lady Geraldine and her uncle had been marked by sorrow and disappointment. The reader is already acquainted with the early misery of the former, and the cold and cheerless dreariness of her after life; nor had that of her uncle been much more fortunate. His first sorrow was the marriage and departure of his sister, and the entire estrangement which ensued. Books, and the society of the few men of letters which England then afforded, were the only consolations for this deep sorrow that he admitted. He married late in life, more to satisfy the wishes of those who feared that the direct line of his ancient race should pass away, than from any inclination of his own. His wife died two years after their marriage, leaving him a son, who had indeed been the staff, the hope, and the comfort of his age. But it was now only that Lord Arlborough enjoyed the species of happiness, which he was best formed to feel.—Geraldine and Juliet, Hubert and his boy,

formed a circle round him, beyond which he cared not to look ; except, indeed, towards Camilla and her husband, but their love for those he loved, was so strong, and so true, that he almost forgot they were not also of his family.

Whoever has watched a very young mother in the first pride and extacy of her joy at being such, must have remarked a thousand pretty indications of the delightful feelings awakened within her ; not only does she taste the new-born rapture with the keen freshness of her age, but she fears not to display it openly, and every thought, every action, every word, every look, seems to have some connection with her babe. So it was with Juliet ; and happily for her, she was surrounded by those, whose value for her peerless treasure almost equalled her own. They wearied not of listening to her discoveries of his talents, and most cordially agreed in opinion, that her little Ferdinand promised to be quite as lovely as the infant Mondello, if not rather more so. Among other fanciful demonstrations of love to her boy, Juliet had instituted a sort

of monthly fête, which she called his *little birthday*, and which she proclaimed was to take place on the same day of the month on which he was born, till he had completed the important period of his first year. Morgante was the master of the revels on these occasions, and proved his fancy exceedingly fertile in devising a variety of ways, by which to celebrate the oft returning jubilee.

On the first of May, his preparations were unusually splendid, for not only had the young heir completed half a year of life, but it was a rural festival always hailed with mirth and song by the peasantry of those good old times; and on this occasion, the tenants of Lord Arlborough were to dance upon the green, and then sup on cakes and ale, beneath the shade of an enormous cedar which was the pride of Arlborough park. The spot chosen for the meeting was at the distance of half a mile from the castle; but Morgante used the power vested in him with great freedom, and notwithstanding the distance, chairs, tables, cups and trenchers,

may, even tapestry for a canopy, and mats for the feet of the noble party, were conveyed thither, and commodiously arranged, long before the hour of four in the afternoon, which was named for the time of assembling. The page was so impatient for his mistress to see all the wonders he had performed, that he hurried the party from the castle, including the family of Mondello, while their rustic guests were still pouring from the village. One reason for this haste was his fear, lest the multitude of flowers, with which he had adorned the seats prepared for them, might fade before they came.

It was indeed a lovely scene that greeted them, the season was unusually advanced, and the trees were already clothed in that tender green, which, if it show not the ripe and rich perfection of a later season, has all the freshness and bright promise of young hope to cheer the eye, and glad the heart, after the dreary interval of leafless winter.

Cowslips, primroses, blue-bells and daffodils,

hung in rich garlands from the trees, adorned the canopy that sheltered the high seats, and almost covered a lofty pole, which reared itself high into the air, in the midst of the many tables spread for the village guests. Numerous groups of children already stood on the space around them, and from the park gates to the place of rendezvous, a string of sturdy happy-looking rustics were hastening forward.

The sound of pipes and tabors was heard, the moment the party from the castle appeared, and a few minutes afterwards, a loud hurrah from the assembled multitude spoke their hearty congratulations. The two children were then carried forward to look at the dancers who were now forming themselves in double lines, immeasurably long, upon the turf, and the animated crowing of the infant Ferdinand at the spectacle, was declared by all, to show a degree of observation greatly beyond his age.

The unwearied dancers beat the ground in cadence to the merry pipes, for two hours, and then they paused; but it was more because

they could no longer resist the tempting aspect of the large flagons that the servants were placing on the board, than from any feeling that they had had enough of it. Lord Arlborough now proposed to the Countess di Mondello, that they also should adjourn for the purpose of taking refreshments; but before the party left the ground, they walked round the tables at which the guests were already seated, followed by the nurses, who indulged the curiosity of the maids and matrons, by displaying to them the wondrous beauty of their respective charges.

Notwithstanding the hospitable extent of the tables, there were more persons present than could find a seat at them, and these assembled themselves round the great cedar tree, where, stretched upon the turf, they were furnished by the attentive menials with abundance of the same fare as that supplied to the more fortunate individuals, who had obtained seats; the greater portion of this recumbent party were of the very lowest rank, including more than one

sturdy travelling beggar, who hailed the occasion for obtaining a meal, without even the cost of asking for it. Amongst these was an old man, who did not repose himself on the turf like the rest, but stood with his back resting against the tree, and his eye following the party of Lord Arlborough, as they made their progress through their numerous guests.

“Have those poor folks all they want yonder, Morgante?” said Lord Hubert, pointing towards the cedar.

“I will ask them, my lord,” replied the page, “that no respect may be wanting to their tattered doublets; but if I may judge by the number of journeys I have seen Richard and Humphry make between them and the cart that holds our stores, I should think that by this time they must be pretty well filled, beggars though they be.”

The little envoy bounded off to the cedar tree, and as he did not immediately return, Lord Hubert himself good-naturedly followed, that he might be sure nothing like discontent

or disappointment was felt by any one. When he arrived within a few yards of the tree, he observed Morgante standing with his eyes earnestly fixed on the old man above described.

The page had placed himself among a group of three or four men, who had just risen from their seats, on the turf, in such a manner as to be concealed from the grey-headed stranger. The eyes of the old man were still bent upon the ladies and children, who were now standing at the end of the tables, which approached nearest the tree. While Lord Arlborough, on whose arm Juliet was leaning, himself, presented the little hero of the fête to a fine boy of twelve years' old, who had risen from the table to receive this distinguished mark of favour.

“It may be, Gilbert Pringle,” said the old nobleman, gaily, “that when you are miller of Fullford, as your father, grandfather, and great grandfather, have been before you; this young sir shall be your landlord—at any rate, he shall be your son’s landlord, my boy—so drink his health in a bumper.”

This was said loud enough for the whole party under the cedar tree to hear it, and jovial as those of their thriftless calling generally are, they seized the opportunity for another draught, screaming at the top of their lungs,—“Long life to the heir of Arlborough !”

Lord Hubert's eyes had followed the direction of Morgante's, which were fixed with an earnestness of attention that excited his curiosity as to the object of it. He was greatly struck with the hue and expression of the remarkable countenance, to which his notice was thus led.—The old man looked pale as a spectre ; his great height appeared shrunk by age and infirmity, yet there was something in the air of his person, though failing in strength, and covered with rags, which gave an idea of dignity. This might, perhaps, be greatly owing to the commanding cast of his features, which, meagre and pale as he was, could not be looked at, without admiration. Morgante withdrew his eyes from his face for a moment, on Lord Hubert's laying his hand on his shoulder, and saying :—

“Who is that singular old man, Morgante? What makes you look at him so earnestly?”

“For the love of God, stay where you are, my lord, for one moment,” replied the page; “and do not take your eyes from his face.”

Having said this in a rapid whisper, he slipped out of the group, leaving Lord Hubert in his place, and stepping lightly round the tree, appeared again close beside the old man, whose attention, however, was too completely rivetted upon Lord Arlborough and the ladies, to perceive him. The moment after, the clear firm voice of Morgante struck suddenly into a strain of church music, and he made the woods ring to his clear pronounciation of the words, whose former effect he well remembered:—

“Vos monachi, vestri stomachi sunt amphora Bacchi.

Vos estis, Deus est testis, deterrima pestis.”

At the first note he uttered, the old man started, and turned quick towards him; and before the last was sounded, he moved from the spot, and ere Morgante could explain to lady

Geraldine, that he believed in his soul he had seen the monk Isidore, the singular stranger was at too great a distance for her eye to judge whether the resemblance were real, or imaginary. Lord Hubert confirmed the report of the strange appearance of the man, as well as of his evident emotion at hearing the chaunt of Morgante.

Geraldine put her arm within that of her uncle, as she listened to this account:—

“How delightful it is,” said she, “to feel that this terror of my life, even if he be indeed near me, can no longer cause me a pang.—Oh, blessed England!” she continued fervently, “how can thy children love that soil enough, on which superstition has no grasp, and tyranny no power!”

“But may he not hurt us even here?” cried Juliet, who had turned pale at the very name of Isidore; “what can he be here for, but to work us woe? would it not be well to have that man traced, dear uncle?”

“And if he were traced, my Juliet, and if

indeed he proved to be my ancient adversary, I have no right or power to drive him hence ; not more, my love, than he can have to harm us."

"I would have given much," said the Countess di Mondello, "to have seen him. No garb, I am very sure, could hide him from me. Do you remember, dearest Geraldine, when I had to walk across your convent parlour before his fearful eyes? Do you remember when he stood before me in the gallery, and spoke my ghastly doom? Do you remember his voice in the hour of my trial? and the last horrid glance of his eye as the rising wall hid me from him?—but no—" she added, speaking rapidly, "you did not see that, Geraldine."

"Talk not of all this, my Camilla," said the Count, throwing his arm around her—"Look at your boy—and forget all you have suffered—."

"No Mondello, I will never forget it—for must I not then forget all that I owe to these matchless friends—no, I do not wish to forget it—but I do wish—may God forgive me, if it be a sin—I do wish that monk could see me face to

face—with this dear arm around me, and that young Cesario there, laughing in my face.”

“For God’s sake, do not wish to see him, Camilla,” said poor Juliet—“I think it would kill me !”

This conversation took place as they returned to the castle, but Morgante, whose licence gave him full liberty to speak on all subjects, uttered not a word. The two nurses, who both of them saw friends among the gay party now beginning to renew the dance, lingered behind the ladies—on observing which, the page ran to the side of Geraldine, and whispered some words in her ear. A short consultation followed between the three ladies, after which each noble mother took her child in her own arms, and entered the castle with them, giving an hour of liberty to their attendants, who instantly returned to join the merry dance.

When the domestics of the household came home, Morgante questioned them all closely, to learn if they had seen such a man as he described, return upon the ground after the

family had left it; but on this point, he could receive no certain information—some said yes—some said no—but at least, it was certain, that nothing had occurred to justify or increase the alarm which this mysterious person had occasioned him.

CHAPTER XLIII.

————— Last scene of all

That ends this strange eventful history.

SHAKSPEARE.

MONTH after month passed away, till the ripe summer had reached its full glory. It was the middle of August, and Juliet, who delighted to prove to Lord Arlborough and Hubert, that she thought the climate of England quite as agreeable as that of Italy, proposed to Geraldine and Camilla to pass some hours of the afternoon with the two children and Morgante, by the side of the beautiful Wye, while Lord Hubert and the Count di Mondello amused themselves with angling. Lord Arlborough had declined the party, having letters of importance to write.

The two young men soon became deeply interested in their sport, and the ladies caught the spirit of it so much, that they left the shady covert, where they had left their nursery, to follow the sportsmen along the bank of the stream.

The child of Camilla had by this time perfectly learnt the use of his feet, and testified the keenest enjoyment while running on the soft sward that bordered the stream, or hiding amidst the stems of the trees from his maid. Juliet had left her babe fast asleep upon a large mantle spread over the grass, with his nurse sitting to watch him on one side, and Morgante stringing a necklace of berries on the other, with which to adorn him when he awaked. The anglers and their fair companions followed the windings of the stream for more than half a mile, and yet they were not at a quarter of that distance from the children, so deeply indented was its sinuous course. While all intently watching the emulative efforts of the fishers, they were startled by a shrill scream from the spot they had left. With one accord, and without

waiting to pronounce a single word, all ran as fast as their strength would bear them, towards the children. On arriving, they found the two nurses on the very verge of the river, one of them sitting on the grass with the little Cesario stretched across her lap, and the other kneeling beside her. A single glance shewed that the child had been in the water, but happily it shewed also, that the wetting of his garments was the only injury he had received, for he was already laughing. Camilla caught the boy to her bosom, and every thing was forgotten in the deep delight of feeling that he was safe; but both lady Geraldine and Juliet anxiously inquired how the accident had happened, and some minutes were occupied in listening to the loquacious assurances of the women that nobody had been to blame, and that the accident had occurred solely in consequence of the extraordinary strength, and almost supernatural activity of Cesario, who had, they declared, escaped from his nurse, with a celerity the most admirable and surprising, and before it was possible for her to

regain possession of his hand, she saw him plunge head over heels in the water.

“Well, well,” said lady Juliet, “it is fortunate that the accident has cost him so little—and now you are aware of his great activity, Mistress Martha, you must be upon the watch that he does not escape from you again.”

“Where is Morgante?” inquired Geraldine, “I should have thought his quick eye might have prevented such an accident.”

“Depend upon it, aunt, he is keeping guard over Ferdinand.—How beautiful your boy looks, Camilla, fresh from his bath!—How shall we clothe him?”

The nurse had by this time contrived to extricate the young Count from his dripping garments, and he did indeed look beautiful, stretching and battling, like a little Hercules, to escape from her hands.

“I think, my lady, that we must borrow the mantle Master Ferdinand is sleeping upon.—He won’t wake, I dare say, if Sarah takes him up gently—and there will be no danger of catching

cold, for our naughty boy here, if he is well wrapped up in that."

"I will get it for you this moment," said Juliet, directing her steps towards the sheltered nook, where they had established their nursery.

"Come with me, Sarah—Ferdinand will be more likely to sleep in your arms than in mine."

The spot they sought was at some distance from that where the accident happened, and perfectly concealed from it by various groups of trees and underwood.

As Juliet drew near the thick copse, within the shelter of which she had left her treasure, her steps involuntarily quickened, and it was almost in running that she passed the last bush, which hid from her view the fragrant couch she had chosen for him. The instant after, she turned again to meet the servant.

"Sarah! They are not there—where has Morgante carried him?"

"Not there, my lady?—Oh dear, my lady, that's quite impossible—it is not a quarter of

a minute ago that I left him there—and Morgante was by him, making his necklace.”

Lady Juliet turned again, to proceed with her nurse towards the copse; in that thick covert of holly bushes and underwood, it was possible she might have mistaken the spot. Sarah, however, directed her steps to the same tree as her mistress, and her blank look of dismay, when she found the place untenanted, sufficiently proved that she had no doubt as to the locality.

“Where in the world has the page taken him?” exclaimed the nurse, “I really do wish, my lady, that you would not give him right and licence to do, and to go, just how and where he pleases with Master Ferdinand. He really is too much of a baby himself to be trusted.”

This was said in an accent which sufficiently shewed the jealous feeling, with which the lady’s favourite page was regarded, and at another time it might have produced a reproving answer: but now Juliet was greatly disturbed, and though she did not for an instant fear, that Morgante could have taken him into danger, she felt vexed

and discomposed at not finding her child where she had left him.

Lord Hubert overtook her at this moment, exclaiming gaily:—

“I do hope our boy, Juliet, will be just such another as Camilla’s; I never saw such a glorious fellow. She has been trying to cover him with her veil, while waiting for your mantle, and there he is kicking and tearing in defence of his liberty and his nakedness, like a young lion.”

“But the mantle is gone, Hubert,” said Juliet, looking almost vexed at his gaiety—“Morgante has carried the child I know not where—Is it not strange?”

“Morgante!—Morgante, boy!” called Lord Hubert hastily.

“Fear nothing love,” he said, turning to his wife, “you know it is impossible he should come to harm while the page is with him.—Why, Juliet—you are positively looking pale—What is it you fear?”

“I know not, Hubert—Oh no!” she continued, while her colour returned with a bright

glow that spread even to her forehead—"Oh no! I fear nothing—could I stand here thus, if I did?"

"Trust me they are within a bow-shot of us. Morgante! ho! Morgante!"

But still no voice replied. Geraldine, Camilla, and the Count now joined them; but though it was evident to all of them that Juliet was uneasy, the general confidence in Morgante was so great, that they laughed at her maternal weakness.

"Now tell me, Juliet," said her husband, throwing his arm around her, "what possible danger can your fancy conjure up, that could at once have befallen both Morgante and our boy?" As he said this, he turned towards lady Geraldine, appealing to her for approbation on the justice of his remark; but instead of giving the smiling assent he expected, she fixed her eyes upon him with a countenance, in which he plainly read that some terrible idea had occurred to her. He quitted the side of his wife, and taking the arm of Geraldine in his, drew her apart, and said—

"What are you thinking of, Geraldine? For God's sake, tell me instantly."

“Isidore!” was the only word she uttered in reply.

“God of Heaven!” exclaimed the terrified father. “Oh! Geraldine! it will kill her; yet how is it possible that he should have removed them both—thus promptly—thus silently?—no, no, it cannot be.”

“All that I am sure of, is, that he has the will to do it,” replied Geraldine. “Hubert, it is her child, my child, Lord Arlborough’s child: he would, in removing that infant, destroy us all at once.”

“Breathe not his name before poor Juliet. Mondello and I will beat the country round, with twenty followers, should you be right.—But, oh! gracious God! one single moment would be enough for him.”

“We must not reason thus,” replied Geraldine; “return to the castle, Hubert, and order the servants to follow you. Mondello shall wait for you here. It would be vain to attempt concealing from Juliet, that you are sufficiently alarmed to take this step; all we can do, is not to let her hear the name of Isidore.”

Lord Hubert left her, and she returned to the party, who were still vainly examining the copse on all sides, and making the air resound with the name of Morgante.

It were needless to follow step by step the hourly increasing misery of that night. With hearts smarting for their own share of the suffering, not one of the wretched party, assembled round Juliet, seemed to have a thought but for her.

It is dreadful to view the extremity of mental agony in one so young. Who was there could dare speak a word of comfort to the wretched mother? They all gave way to every wild suggestion, and through the night they followed her—sometimes into the park—and sometimes into the dark recesses of the fatal copse.

At length, completely exhausted, she stretched herself, towards morning, on the floor of her room, and lay there, without uttering a word for more than an hour; she then started suddenly upon her feet, and screamed the name of “Isidore!”

As she did so, she looked first in the face of

her aunt, and then in that of Camilla, as if asking them to contradict the suspicion which, at that moment, had darted upon her. But, alas ! they both were silent ; for both knew that the dreadful idea, once awakened, gained strength by every moment's meditation.

“ Then so it is,” sobbed Juliet, convulsively. “ You would not both stand there hearing me say so, without one word, one look, one sign of contradiction ! Oh ! my boy, my boy ! he has already murdered thee—my pretty Ferdinand—my own sweet babe—are his eyes already closed for ever, think you ?—Surely God in his mercy will not make me long survive him—my babe—my own sweet babe ——.”

In this manner she ran on, wringing the hearts of all who listened to her, till as the day broke upon them, shewing their pale watchful countenances, she said—

“ Go to rest—you cannot help me. Let me not be selfish in my misery—pray go to rest ;” and seeing that they still lingered near her, she laid herself on her bed, saying, “ now you will go both of you ; perhaps I too shall sleep.”

This was said, rather with a view to procure repose for them than for herself; but, in truth, they had not left the room many minutes, before exhausted nature sank under sorrow and fatigue, and the unhappy Juliet found a respite from suffering, in sleep.

Dreadful as were the fears, which, during these hours, haunted the imaginations of the parents and friends of the little Ferdinand, they could hardly exaggerate the danger into which he had fallen. When the young Mondello fell into the water, his maid who was, in truth, at the distance of only a few yards, uttered a scream of terror; and the nurse of Ferdinand ran to the spot, saying, as she quitted her charge—

“Do not leave the baby, Morgante; I will see what is the matter.”

Hardly was she out of sight, when, from the bushes immediately behind the spot where the infant lay, a tall man, in the dress of a peasant, appeared with a large basket on his arm, such as the country people used for the conveyance of the river fish to the neighbouring town. He

pushed aside the bushes, and came forward with no appearance either of haste or agitation ; and when Morgante exclaimed—" Keep off—keep off, good fisherman," it was more from a fear that his charge should be suddenly awakened than from any idea of danger. The man stooped towards the child, without replying, and deliberately raising him, together with the mantle on which he slept, laid him in the basket, which hung on his left arm, while he drew a pistol from his bosom, and, presenting it to the head of Morgante, said, without the least appearance of trepidation :—

" Speak a word, or move a step, and you die. You are no fool, sir page, and you know me.—Live to tell your masters who it is that has the charge of their heir. Fear not for his life, boy ; I shed no more blood. At the foot of the cross shall this child be reared ; and the voice which shall claim the broad lands of Arlborough will be heard from beneath the cowl of a monk. Yet they must be listened to ; and then shall I have repaired the evil which the accursed heretic, who

owns them now, has wrought on me, and the cause I serve. Go to Lord Arlborough, and tell him this from me—you know who speaks it to you.”

So saying, he quietly disappeared among the boughs, at the same spot where he had left them; but, as he did so, he continued to point his weapon at the page, who however strictly obeyed his mandate, and neither moved nor spoke.

Morgante did, indeed, know him, for though his person was disguised by a leathern jerkin, no attempt to conceal his features had been made, and the gaunt visage of Isidore was revealed to his sight.

That quickness of thought which seemed in Morgante rather an instinct than a faculty, now stood him in good stead. It instantly struck him that the monk would depart in one of the little fishing-boats which he had seen half an hour before, paddling about at a short distance below. Not only his manner of going, but the very spot to which it was likely he should direct his steps, suggested itself to the page; and that so forcibly as to induce him instantly to act upon the conviction.

It was well known to those of the neighbourhood, who, like Morgante, haunted every thicket of the forest, that, in the most obscure part of it, closely bordering on the Wye, resided an aged anchoret, whose inoffensive manner of life prevented any persecution for his principles, though the rude cross beside the door of his hut spoke without disguise, that he was of the ancient faith.

“It is there the priest will take him,” said Morgante, internally; “and it is there I will meet him.”

The page knew every path of the beautiful forest-ground that surrounded the mansion of Lord Arlborough.

“Let them row as fast as they may,” thought he, “I can find a shorter road than the Wye has done; and I shall be at the hermit’s cell before him.”

This was no difficult task to his activity. He not only arrived there; but, finding the place deserted, contrived to conceal himself so close to the hut, that its wall of boughs and mud would not be able to impede either the seeing or hearing of every thing which passed within it.

He had been for more than half an hour in his lair, before he heard any other sound than that of the summer wind among the branches ; and he began to fear that his conjecture was wrong.

It was at that moment that he first felt the full misery which this event must occasion, if his weak efforts failed ; for till this doubt assailed him, both his confidence in the truth of his supposition, and the exertion necessary to enable him to profit by it, had prevented his dwelling upon the possible results. His sanguine spirit was sinking fast within him, when he became aware of approaching footsteps ; and another moment proved him to be right in every particular of his rapid conjecture. Three figures approached the hut ; the two foremost were Isidore and the hermit, as the owner of the hovel was called throughout the county ; the third was a female, and as she drew near, he perceived, with a beating heart, that she bore an infant in her arms ; she passed within a foot of the bush which concealed Morgante ; and he saw that the child she carried was wrapped in the mantle of Juliet. A large ebony cross,

lay upon her bosom, and shewed plainly enough what the tie was, that bound her to the men whose steps she followed.

The declared intention of Isidore, as spoken to himself, and the spectacle he now witnessed, left little to be learnt concerning their purpose : but that little was furnished by the conversation which followed their entrance ; not one word of which was lost by the page.

By far the greater part of this conversation related to the praiseworthy objects of the enterprise ; and the trio agreed in professing their conviction, that they were performing an acceptable service to heaven. The only words of any importance to the listener, were those which alluded to their purpose of again embarking the following morning on the Wye, and proceeding to Chepstow, at which town Isidore said he had already taken measures which would enable him to proceed without difficulty to France. Now, then, Morgante knew all ; and there he stood within a yard of the plotters, his heart burning with indignation, and his spirit brave as a lion ; but powerless, as to any good his strength could

do, as the precious babe, whose evil destiny he was determined to avert, or die beside him.

More than an hour of daylight still remained ; and during this time it was necessary that he should continue concealed and motionless ; but he calculated that the night would be sufficient for his purpose ; and having decided upon what this purpose was, he lay with resolute stillness within his covert, till all was hushed in the cell, and the remaining light so faint, that he feared not, should his retreating steps be heard, but that he could escape observation amid the deep shadow of the wood. Cautiously and securely he withdrew himself from his station ; and in a few minutes was in a broad path which he well knew led to the town of Monmouth, at the distance of rather more than ten miles. The tedious hours, during which he had waited beside the cell, had afforded him ample time for meditation as to the course he must pursue ; but his decision was not made without some difficulty.

Arlborough was at less than five miles' distance, and he felt strongly tempted to relieve the misery he knew was there, by directing his

steps thither. Had his time for reflection been shorter, he would have probably done so; but during the long meditation which his watch had enabled him to make, it occurred to him, that though the child could full easily be rescued from the custody he was in, the perpetrators of the crime might escape, leaving the family for ever in dread of a renewal of the attempt.

The law permitted not the continuance of any Catholic in the country, who was known to be tampering with the religion of the people as established by law, and the wily page determined to deliver the monk into the hands of those, who could, without illegal violence, place him where he never more might work evil to the race against whom his soul harboured such deadly vengeance. To Monmouth, therefore, Morgante directed his steps, and though he could not inspire either the Justice of the Peace to whom he applied himself, or his clerk, with any great or genuine portion of the energy which was beating at his own heart, the name of Lord Arlborough prevailed so far, as to enable him, by two o'clock in the morning, to get a sufficient

party on horseback, carrying with them a very satisfactory warrant for the peaceable and legal execution of their object.

Morgante thankfully accepted a seat behind one of the men, and in this fashion re-threaded the mazes of the wood, and led his escort, with no other light than what was furnished by the stars, to the door of the hermit's cell.

The incongruous party within was soon roused from their slumbers; but having happily less power than will, for resistance, the monk Isidore was secured without difficulty, though a brace of loaded pistols, laid beside his straw couch, shewed that his purpose had been to resist to the death any attempt to molest him. The terrified woman protested her innocence of all evil intention, and begged for leave to carry the sweet babe home, to show the care she had taken of it. But Morgante said he would save her the trouble, and little Ferdinand proved that the office of nurse was not new to him, by the eager manner in which he stretched out his arms towards him, the moment he was aware of his presence.

The hermit watched the proceedings of the party in perfect silence, and submitted to be led away captive without either resistance or observation. Isidore was equally silent; but when Morgante said to the leader of the party—"My Lord Arlborough will, I know, wish to see these men himself,"—the expression of his countenance was terrible to look at, and his dark eye, of which age had failed to quench the brightness, spoke a language that induced one of the men to bind his hands behind him; he struggled to avoid this indignity, but it was in vain, the peace-officer coolly observing, that it was his duty to prevent mischief, as well as to punish it, and that he never saw eyes like his, without clapping a fastening upon the hands. Daylight had found its way even among the deep shadow of the forest, before the party left the hut.

It was thought safest to conduct the prisoners on foot; but the almost exhausted page was accommodated as before, and clasping his precious charge to his bosom, he entreated the constable

behind whom he rode, to push forward that they might be the first to relieve the dreadful fears of the family respecting the little treasure they carried with them. The man, who felt that this office might not only be pleasant but profitable, made his horse step out, and less than an hour's moderate riding brought them to the court of the castle.

Morgante pushed his way through such of the servants as were already at their work, and running straight to the chamber of Juliet, entered it about ten minutes after she had fallen into the feverish slumber that followed the departure of her friends. At another time the thoughtful and affectionate page would have studied to break so overpowering a surprise gently; but now the last effort of his strength, both of mind and body, only sufficed to take him to the side of Juliet's bed, when, laying the child upon her bosom, he sunk on the floor beside it, without sense or motion.

Juliet awakened at the touch, and in an in-

stant was conscious of the dear arms that already twined around her neck. "It was a dream then—only a horrid dream!" she exclaimed, passionately kissing her babe; but another moment recalled all the reality, and heedless of poor Morgante, she sprang past him, and calling on the names of Geraldine, Hubert, and Camilla, as she passed, hastened on to the apartment of Lord Arlborough.

Lord Hubert and the Count di Mondello were sitting with him. On returning from their fruitless search, they had first taken the hopeless report to him, and remained in his room to keep for a while longer, this disappointment of her last hope from the wretched Juliet. On seeing her husband, she held up her boy before him, then laid him in the arms of his delighted grandfather, and throwing herself on the bosom of Lord Hubert, gave way to a flood of those delicious tears, with which nature so kindly relieves a heart too full to bear its gladness.

Geraldine and Camilla, who were still toge-

ther, had heard the wild call of Juliet, as she ran through the corridor, and entered Lord Arlborough's room a moment after her. The rapture of that reunion may well be guessed at; and for a short space, caressing the child, and wishing each other joy of his return, occupied them entirely; but ere long, lady Geraldine seemed to recall the remembrance of all that had passed, and looking around her, exclaimed,—“Does any among you know how he came back? Juliet, dearest, where did you find him?”

“Good heaven!” she replied, while an indistinct idea of having seen the page, returned to her:—“I do believe it was Morgante; I have behaved most cruelly;” and, without waiting to explain herself further, she returned to her room, and found the faithful and happy boy recovering from the faintness that had seized him; but so weak that he could only sob, in answer to the questions she put to him. “Wine, good Alice,” said Juliet, while she endeavoured to raise him from the ground; and when in a few minutes the girl returned with the greatly needed re-

freshment, Morgante took it eagerly, and found sufficient strength in the draught, to enable him to relate his tale.

He had scarcely finished it, and had as yet answered none of the questions which the whole party now assembled about him were so impatient to ask, when notice was brought that the prisoners were arrived, and the posse who accompanied them desired to know, if it were Lord Arlborough's pleasure that they should be examined before him.

Had more time been allowed for deliberation, and had calmer feelings taken place of those produced by the strong emotions of the last few hours, it is probable that the high-minded Geraldine would have avoided the presence of her enemy in the hour of his shame. As it was, however, the party, (including Morgante, and the infant who was again locked in the arms of his young mother,) followed Lord Arlborough to the hall.

Seldom has any man found himself face to face with beings whom he had so deeply injured.

Isidore stood erect, and looked fixedly at each, as they entered. Camilla was greatly affected at the sight of him. The last moment in which she had seen him, when he stood by, watching her immured from light and life, rushed to her memory, and she hid her eyes on the shoulder of her husband.

Isidore's lip curled in scorn as he watched her. "Vile apostate, perjured nun!" he exclaimed: "Well may you dread to look upon me. But think you that his arms will shield you from the wrath of Heaven?—Lost, deluded wretches," he continued, looking deliberately at each of them in turn:—"You fancy that you triumph—is it not so? You think that Isidore is in your toils? Lost wretches! dread to meet him at the day of doom. For a few short years of human life your dream shall last; and then all, all, shall awake, and see the God of Justice place his thunder in my hands. Remember my words in the darkness of the night—remember them in the hour of sickness and of death. It is Isidore who shall be your judge in heaven!"

There was something awful in the look and voice of the meagre, pale, old man, who stood before them; and his words made them shudder.

“Speak not such blasphemy, old man,” said Lord Arlborough:—“Even thy false doctrines justify not such words as these. I owe you, Isidore, a heavy debt of vengeance; but I have so learned Christ, that I can speak your pardon. Yet go from hence; go from our peaceful shores; we would not combat age and weakness; still, remember, monk, you will be watched, and if you remain within the reach of our laws, I may not a second time be able to release you.”

“Unbind my hands, then,” replied Isidore, “and I will go.”

Lord Arlborough ordered the bandages to be removed from his arms. When this was done, he once more looked at the Earl, at Geraldine, and at Camilla.

“Heretics! accursed heretics!” he exclaimed, in a deep low voice, which though perfectly audible, was almost a whisper:—“I go to judge ye.” As he spoke, he drew a dagger from his

bosom, and with a quickness that defied prevention, plunged it to the hilt in his bosom.

The horror this deed left on the minds of those who witnessed it, was painful and enduring; but it was impossible not to feel also the justice of the retribution which had visited the bigot Isidore.

The destiny of those to whom he had caused such bitter sufferings, continued as happy as his own had been wretched. Lord Arlborough's green age was prolonged, to give happiness to all around him. Hubert and Juliet, Mondello and Camilla, lost not by the continuance of their happiness, the grateful enjoyment of it; and Geraldine, even while watching these examples of wedded love, lamented not that her fate was different; nor had she reason to do so. Honoured, beloved, admired; her life glided on with as much to sweeten, and as little to annoy her hours, as mortal destiny could permit. Morgante, in the fervent gratitude, and partial fondness of the noble circle in which he lived, and to which, from the day of Ferdinand's return, he was admitted as an equal, passed

his years free from sorrow or care of any kind.

The Count d'Albano and Father Laurence brought the projected marriage to a happy conclusion, but though the hopes of the Count for an heir are known to have long continued, no record has reached us, that any eighth Count of Albano was ever heard of in Italy.

Only one person more remains to be mentioned, and that is the brave-hearted captain Jones. Juliet did not forget him,—though her historian has done so too long. Soon after her marriage, she had the great pleasure of receiving a visit from him, and the joy of their meeting was in proportion to the misery of their parting. More need hardly be said of it.

THE END.

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